Tamil TIMES

VOL XVIII No. 11 ISSN 0266-4488 15 NOVEMBER 1999 90p

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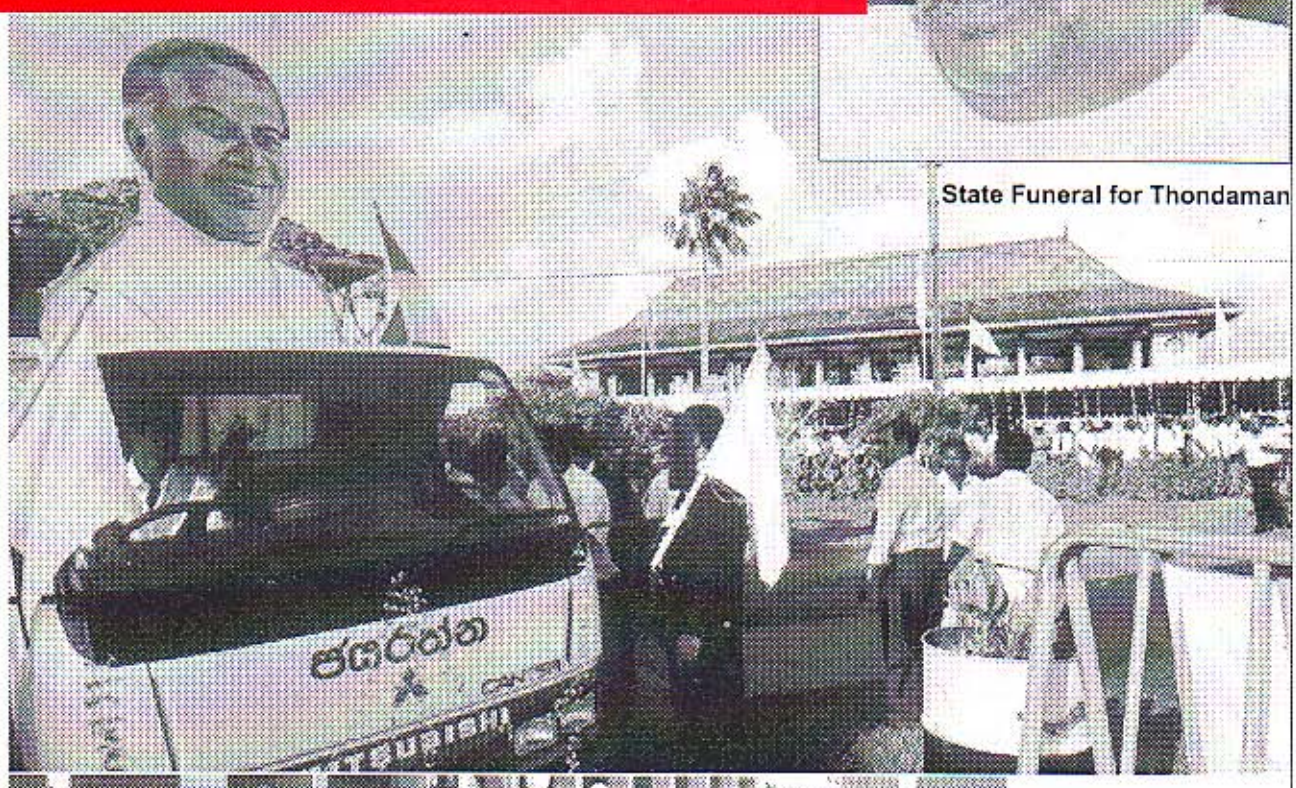

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Tamil TIMES

ISSN 0266 - 44 88
Vol. XVIII No. 11
15 NOVEMBER 1999

Published by:
TAMIL TIMES LTD
PO Box 121, Sutton,
Surrey SM1 3TD
United Kingdom
Phone: 0181 644 0972
Fax: 0181 241 4557
Email: prajan@gn.apc.org

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka	£15/US$25
Australia	Aus$45
	(Australian Bank cheques only)
USA	US$35
Canada	Can$40
All other countries	£20.US$35

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Presidential Election

The Presidential Race is on. The field is replete with candidates, over a dozen. The gladiators in the contest are no doubt the incumbent Chnadrika Kumaratunga and the United National Party leader Ranil Wickremasinghe. The JVP candidate Nandana Gunatilake and the Left and Democratic Alliance candidate Vasudeva Nanayakkara are expected to obtain not an insignificant number of votes, but that will have only the effect of taking away votes from the main contestants, not the outcome which is bound to be either Kumaratunga or Wickremasinghe.

Kumaratunga had more than a year to be in power as President. Could she not have waited for some more time? Some say that with a wafer thin majority in parliament and some of the constituent parties in her Peoples Alliance coalition openly bickering too often, and the opposition not playing ball with her to push through the government's constitutional and devolution proposals, Kumaratunga had become increasingly frustrated and wanted to go before the people for a fresh mandate that would strengthen her position. But her decision to prematurely throw the gauntlet at this time is the biggest gamble of her political life. Wickremasinghe had no choice but to pick it up, and he appears to have done so with some degree of confidence in the outcome.

If the split in the UNP that occurred at the beginning of this month, with scores of members including Members of Parliament and Provincial Councillors crossing over to support Kumaratunga, could be said to have affected Wickremassinghe's chances, as for Kumaratunga the unprecedented reverses suffered by the military in the battlefront with the LTTE could not have happened at a worse time. The LTTE's advancing juggernaut rolls on and on with camp after camp and town after town in the Wanni falling into the hands of the Tamil Tigers. In a matter of three weeks since 2 November, the total gains obtained by the military since the beginning of 1996 have been wiped out. The entire territory (almost 500 square miles) captured by government forces at great cost in terms of men and material have now come under LTTE control. The juggernaut still seems to roll on with the military defence lines turning into forward lines of the LTTE. It looks as if the war in the Wanni and other parts of the North-east would rage on with tens of thousands of people being displaced while the battle for the Presidency continues in the rest of the country.

As the propaganda war hots up, the question as to how to end the war and resolve the ethnic conflict and how to relate to the LTTE in this context seems to have emerged as the most serious issue particularly following the highlighting of a news item in the "Tamilnet" website that Wickremasinghe had agreed, if he won, to hand over the administration of the North-east to the LTTE for two years during which negotiations with the LTTE would take place. But when he was confronted by journalists and his opponents, Wickremasinghe denied he ever made such a statement. In retaliation, the UNP is now dredging out an old interview given by President Kumaratunga to the American "Time" magazine in which she appears to have said that she was prepared to hand over the administration of the Northeast for ten years to the LTTE.

The fact of the matter is that it was during the UNP's uninterrupted 17-year tenure that the ethnic conflict escalated into a full-blown war. Mr Wickremasinghe was a leading and powerful figure in that administration. Whether his recent statements relating to the resolution of the conflict and dealings with the LTTE represent a political transformation on his part is yet to be seen in practice, that is if he won in his bid for the Presidency.

Presidential Race, The Candidates

More than a dozen candidates have entered the race to be President of Sri Lanka. But the main contenders are the incumbent Chandirika Kumaratunga and the leader of the Opposition United National Party, Ranil Wickrematunga.

With more than a year to go, President Chandrika Kumaratunga surprised everyone when she suddenly announced in late October that would resign and seek a fresh mandate from the people. The election will take place on 21 December.

They party candidates are with their symbols which will appear on the ballot paper are:

- President and PA candidate Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (Chair),
- Opposition Leader and UNP candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe (Elephant),
- JVP candidate Nandana Gunatilake (Bell),
- Dr. Harischandra Wijetunga from the Sinhalaye Maha Sammathaye Bhumi Putra Pakshaya (Plane),
- Ariyawansa Dissanayake of the Democratic United National Front (Eagle),
- Dr. Kamal Karunadasa of the People's Liberation Solidarity Front (Lantern),
- Alwis Weerakkody Premawardena of Bahujana Nidahas Peramuna (Butterfly),
- Vasudeva Nanayakkara of the Left and Democratic Alliance(Clock),
- Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha of the Liberal Party (Book) and Abdul Razool of Sri Lanka Muslim Party (Scale).

The three independent contenders are:

Tennyson Edirisooriya (Scissors), Hudson Samarasinghe (Radio) and W.B.M. Ranjit (Almirah).The list of contestants was notable by the absence of a candidate from any Tamil political party. Mr Kumar Ponnambalam, the leader of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress who has been unsuccessfully in the past was expected to submit his nomination, but it is said that the LTTE had not consented and therefore stayed out of the race. •

Sonia Gandhi Pleads for Convicts in Husband's Murder

The Opposition and Congress leader and widow of the murdered former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is reported to have pleaded for clemency on behalf of Nalini, one of those sentenced to death by the Court.

The Congress (I) spokesman, Mr Ajit Jogi has revealed to journalists on 18 November that Mrs Gandhi during a private meeting with Indian President K R Narayanan had conveyed to him her feelings, as well as those of her son and daughter, that the life of Nalini, one of the accused in the assassination of her late husband and former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, be spared as she was the mother of a child.

It is said that Mrs Gandhi has favoured Nalini's commutation on the ground that no child should be orphaned or allowed to suffer by an act of State. She had also written to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Mr M Karunanidhi, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women in this regard.

Mrs Gandhi has further expressed the view that neither she nor her children have any desire to see the other three accused Suthenthirarajah, Sriharan and Perarivalan executed. She and her children also favoured the commutation of their death sentence too.

Many who had severely condemned the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, but who have always opposed death pena-lty as a means of exacting revenge for the crime committed have been touched by the Mrs Gandhi's plea on behalf of those who were involved in her husband's murder.

Sonia Gandhi

The London-based Tamil Information Centre (TIC) in a statement welcomed Mrs Sonia Gandhi's appeal to the Indian President to commute the death sentence against Nalini. The TIC further welcomed Mrs Gandhi's views on the other three accused which clearly indicated her respect and concern for the rights of all. Her gesture to Nalini, which is supported by her children, is a highest example of forgiveness and triumph of compassionate love. This has touched the hearts of many Tamils and has brought hope and confidence to those who are working for a consensus to end the death penalty, the TIC statement said.

The TIC has encouraged people to send messages of appreciation to Mrs Sonia Gnadhi for the initiatives that she had taken about Nalini and her views on the execution of the other three accused.

The Madras High Court on 17 November reserved orders on the petitions filed by the four con-demned prisoners in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case seeking to set aside the order of the Tamil Nadu Governor rejecting their clemency petitions.

After hearing both sides, Justice K Govindarajan reserved the orders on the petitions filed by Nalini, Murugan, Santhan and Perarivalan, who were sentenced to death in the case.

Earlier this month, the federal government advised authorities in the southern state of Tamil Nadu to postpone the execution of Nalini and three men convicted with her in the 1991 assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The executions were delayed indefinitely to allow the president time to review petitions for mercy.

Rajiv Gandhi was killed by a suicide bomber who strapped explosives to her waist and mingled with crowds in the southern town of Sriperumbudur during a 1991 campaign rally.

The Supreme Court had rejected appeals by Nalini, T.Suthendraraja, V.Sriharan and G.Perarivalan, who were among 26 defendants sentenced to death last year after a six-year trial. A special court in Madras has commuted the death sentences of the other 22 defendants to life imprisonment. •

Camp After Camp Fall in Tiger Blitzkrieg

D B S Jeyaraj

The First phase of Operation Unceasing Waves or "Oyatha Alaigal" in Tamil was conducted by the Liberation Tigers of Thamil Eelam at Mullaitheevu in July 1996. It resulted in the fall of the Mullaitheevu camp and town to the Tigers. The second phase was executed last September in the Kilinochi - Paranthan region. The Kilinochi military complex was overrun by the LTTE then. Both phases were resounding successes for the Tigers with more than two thousand soldiers being killed in Mullaitheevu and Kilinochi. Both towns have been under LTTE control and the army has been unable to recapture them since then thereby giving the lie to an often repeated claim by Colombo that the LTTE has never been able to retrieve lost territory militarily.

The dawn of November 1999 saw the LTTE launch the third phase of Operation Unceasing Waves or "Oyatha Alaigal -3". It has proved to be the most spectacular military advance recorded by the LTTE in the entire history of the armed conflict. Within seven days beginning 2 November the Tigers were able to recapture almost the entire territory taken by the armed forces in the Eastern Wanni sector from 13 May 1997 onwards. Like a massive tidal wave engulfing everything before it the LTTE's third Ceaseless Wave operation swept on from Oddusuddan on the A-34 Highway to the outskirts of Omanthai on the A-9 highway.

If one were to adapt Winston Churchill's famous line after the aerial battle of Britain in 1940 to the LTTE's blitzkrieg, it could be said that "Never in the history of the Eelam conflict has so much territory been regained in so few days with so little losses by such small groups of Tigers from so many soldiers". By mid-November the lashing fury of the unleashed military tidal wave had somewhat abated but the fighting in the Wanni region had not

LTTE Leader V Pirabhakaran

totally subsided with Vavuniya town, the Weli Oya region and positions in Mannar being under threat of further attacks.

Unusual Manoeuvre

The LTTE's military operation was preceded by an unusual manoeuvre by the army. Starting in mid October the Sri Lankan security forces advanced along the old Kandy road from Karippattaimurippu on the Mankulam-Mullaitheevu road and established a permanent presence on Ambakamam. Subsequently troops thrust forward from Oddusuddan on the east of Karippattaimurippu on the Mankulam-Mullaitheevu road known also as the A-32 highway. These troops established forward defence lines that were linked to Ambakamam positions in a somewhat rectangular shape. On 30 and 31 October troops used this rectangular formation to proceed further upwards in the general direction of Muthaiyankaddu. After meeting stiff LTTE resistance these troops returned to Ambakamam and Oddusuddan on November 1st morning.

Even as these activities were going on something unusual was taking place at Katsilaimadhu to the north of Oddusuddan and south of Puthukkudiyiruppu. Pandara Wanniyan the legendary Wanni chieftain of Adankapattu who reigned at Panankamam was defeated by the British led by Major Drieberg at Katsilaimadhu. A stone inscription as well as a statue erected about 20 years ago bear testimony to the heroic image of the last Vanniyan to defy the imperialist aggressor. Katsilaimadhu with its historic significance was witnessing another historic occasion on that day.

LTTE leader Velupillai Prabakharan was reported to have been in Katsilaimadhu on that day. He was there in the company of several senior Tiger commanders like Balraj, Karuna, Sornam, Jeyam, Bhanu, Theepan, Rabat, Nagesh, Anton, Selvarajah, Asha, Durga and Malathie. The LTTE supr-emo and his premier deputies were there to finalise the attack plans for launching operation ceaseless waves - phase three. Even as the military conclave was going on thousands of male and female cadres from the LTTE were secretly converging in nearby areas like Muthaiyankaddu, Sammalankulam, Mulliyawalai, Thanneerootru, Katpoorappulveli,Kodalikkal, Indimadhu and Thanduvan. They were drawn from different LTTE fighting formations like the Charles Anthony and Jeyanthan infantry divisions, Sothiya Women Corps, Kittu artillery brigade, Victor armoured corps, Leopards Commando unit, Black Tiger suicide squads, Anti air craft unit etc. There were also members from auxiliary civilian units.

The Architect

Operation Ceaseless Waves itself was a blueprint drawn by LTTE supremo Prabakharan himself. He was both the architect and chief executive of the operation. Tiger literature claim that the entire operation was guided, inspired and masterminded by the leader himself who is also the supreme commander of the LTTE forces. LTTE deputy military commander in chief Balraj a sonof the Wanni soil himself was in charge of the co-ordinating operational headquarters. Karuna, a senior commander from Batticaloa was the overall field commander. Once the LTTE leader gave the go ahead signal the Tigers commenced onslaught.

The first target was Oddusuddan on the Mullaitheevu road that had been seized by the army last December through operation Revibalaya or Solar power.Oddusuddan was being guarded by the Second Gajaba Regiment on the east and the Walagambaya division of

the Navy on the east. Incidently three Naval divisions were deployed on land duty in the eastern sector of the Wanni. Likewise Air Force divisions were on duty in the Western sector. Both services were being used as supplementary ground troops to assist the army. The Western and Eastern Wanni sectors were demarcated by the Jaffna-Kandy road that bisects the northern mainland called Wanni.

An LTTE commando unit infiltrated army lines on Manavalanpattaimurippu on the Mullaitheevu road on the west of Oddusuddan. Shortly around midnight they attacked the Gajaba troopers from behind. A little later three formations of the LTTE attacked the camp from all three sides.After nine hours of battle the LTTE overan the Oddusuddan camp. The Gajaba Soldiers and Walagampaya naval personnel were virtually annihilated.A fresh column of the LTTE along with the civilian militia came in a motorcade from Mulliyawalai and hoisted the Tiger flag. It is said that Karuna performed the honours. Thereafter the Tigers and their civilian militia began transporting vehicles, ammunition, equipment and the arsenal seized from the army by road to Mullaitheevu.

Camp After Camp Falls

The Tigers then proceeded in three directions. One went north-west towards Ambakamam. The second went westwards to Karippattaimurippu-Olumadhu. The third went south-westwards to Nedunkerny. The latter was taken in the preliminary stages of Operation Jayasikurui itself in May 1997.It is situated on the Puliyankulam-Mullaitheevu road and is the interface of the Vavuniya and Mullaitheevu districts. It is very much the gateway to Mullaitheevu district or the Tiger heartland. The access route between Oddusuddan and Nedunkerny had the 3rd battalion of the Sinha Regiment at Samanankulam and the 8th battalion of the Vijaybahu regiment at Pandarikulam. After fierce fighting Nedunkerny also fell to the LTTE.

In the meantime the other two Tiger columns were confronting two navy divisions stationed on the western flank of the Mullaitheevu-Mankulam road on the one hand and 55th division personnel on the Ambagamam rectangle on the other. After heavy fighting Karippattaimurippu fell. Then the Tigers proceeded along the old Kandy road towards Ambakamam while other formations kept on pounding Olumadhu adjacent to Karippattaimurippu on the road between Mankulam and Mullaitheevu. Reinforcements sent from Mankulam were prevented from reaching Olumadhu as Tiger commandos blew up a bridge over a tributary of the Kanagarayankulam.

Soon Ambakamam fell and in a short while Olumadhu too. Thereafter advancing LTTE personnel began a barrage of artillery pounding against Kanagarayankulam and Mankulam both on the A-9 highway. Shortly Mankulam fell. Thereafter the Tigers started proceeding by vehicles along the Jaffna - Vavuniya road in a southwards direction. The irony in this is that the government had captured the stretch of roadway between Vavuniya and Mankulam through operation Jayasikurui after 19 months of fighting. Now the Tigers were merrily cruising along it. Some rearguard action was proffered at Kanakarayankulam the headquarters of the 56th division manning the eastern Wanni sector. But on the following day it too fell. Then the Tigers went further south to Puliyankulam which also succumbed on the same day.

Finally on 7 November, the Tigers reached Panickaneeraavi on the outskirts of Omanthai nine miles to the north of Vavuniya. Omanthai too had been captured by the army in May 1997. The rapidly retreating troops finally dug in at Omanthai. Reinforced by troops from Vavuniya and with artillery field guns the army began defending Omanthai. Other places where some resistance was displayed were Madhiyamadhu and Nainamadhu on the Puliyankulam-Nedunkerny stretch; Othiyamalai and Pattikkudiyiruppu in the Nedunkerny area; Karappukuthi, Katkidanku near Kanakarayankulam and Semamadhu near Omanthai. At present hostilities continue at Panikkaneeravi, Vilakkuvaithakulam and Pandrikkeithakulam etc.

The LTTE has also seized some points on the Western sector or areas to the west of the A-9 Highway. Moondrumurippu near Mankulam, Mannakulam near Kanakarayankulam and Puthoor near Puliyankulam in the western sector have been seized. Some Airforce personnel and soldiers were killed and injured. The LTTE has also begun artillery attacks on Pallamadhu and Palampitty in Mannar. Both these places are of strategic importance within the context of capturing the Mannar-Ponneryn road. After Jayasikurui was aborted the army had launched a series of operations named Ranaghosha or battlecry and seized a lot of territory and chunks of the Pooneryn road. It was said that the objective was to utilise the Mannar-Pooneryn road as the land route to Jaffna.

Lost in a Week

The government began its manoevres in the Wanni with the launching of operation Jayasikurui on May 13th 1997.It was called off in December last year. The operation had seen the army sustaining tremendous losses with the LTTE indulging in positional warfare defending entrenched positions.Now after Unceasing waves - 3 the army has lost 30 kilometres of the 42 kilometres it had seized on the A-9 highway. It has also lost according to preliminary estimates 1269 square kms of territory on the eastern Wanni front. It has lost area annexed over a period of two and a half years in just a week.10 bases, 24 camps, 116 detachment stations and an unknown amount of bunkers and posts had been lost. Massive amounts of arms, ammunition, equipment, vehicles, tanks and armoured cars etc. had been lost to the enemy. So too were large amounts of dry rations. Though the government puts it at unbelievably low levels the army and navy have lost more than a thousand men. Compared to this LTTE losses are reported to be only in the range of around 200.

The more significant aspect of the fighting was the fact that the LTTE had adopted conventional fighting techniques to the successful extent of chasing the army out. The campaign was thoroughly demoralising as thousands of troops literally ran away instead of fighting. There have been reports of rebellion where officers and militar policemen have been shot. Large scale defections have occurred. There has been a breakdown in discipline. In short the army despite its numerical and logistical superiority has been decisively routed by a "guerrilla force

of boys". How did this happen?

Panic and Confusion

Two developments occurred on the first day itself that had far reaching consequences on the course of immediate war. Firstly the LTTE's anti-Aircraft utilised newly acquired weapons to bring down two helicopters and damage a plane. The Air Force panicked thinking that the Tigers possessed the ability to blast them in the skies. Thereafter the airforce suspended all active engagement in the conflict for more than a week. Thus the beleaguered ground troops on different fronts in the Eastern Wanni sector could not receive aerial assistance of any form.

Secondly the officials in Oddusuddan hastily loaded a South African "Buffel" tank with all communication codes and signal crypts and tried to send it to the 56th division headquarters at Kanakarayankulam after the camp was under attack. The tank got bogged down in the mud. As troops abandoned it the Tigers seized it. Decoding some of the stuff the LTTE began invading the radio communications system of the army. As a knee jerk reaction the army stopped all internal communications. The communications equipment within the combat zone went dead for several days. As a result panic and confusion set in among troops.

The primary cause for the debacle was the suspension of aerial contact and radio communication. Without any proper leadership issuing directives or morale boosting reassurances the individual army detachments began withdrawing. There were also several officers who had begun retreating before troops instead of urging them to stand and fight. The government's refusal to accept dead bodies of soldiers from the LTTE in the conflict zone also fuelled resentment. A collapse of logistical support hampering transport, food supplies and medical treatment also created demoralising impact. After fighting at Oddusuddan and a few other places the soldiers had merely preferred flight to fight. An angle being probed by the government is sabotage and propaganda by pro UNP elements.

In its anxiety to find scapegoats the government has transferred out all senior commanding officers. But there is criticism of the political leadership itself. It is said that many intelligence warnings went unheeded because the government wanted a quick military victory to boost its chances in the Presidential elections. With the advent of Monsoon the terrain in the Wanni is not conducive for fighting but Minister Ratwatte wanted a military drive. Hence Operation Watershed was launched to take Ambagamam as a launching pad for further incursions. Stationing troops on the outer perimeter endangered other points which the Tigers exploited. Thus Watershed became a Waterloo. Also one reason for troop demoralisation was the realisation that they were being cynically expe-nded in a war that had electoral victory as its ultimate motive.

Expert Tactics

Three salient points that contributed to LTTE success were the deployment of a tremendous amount of artillery barrages, the rapid mobility of personnel and vehicles and expert tactics. After the initial stages the element of surprise was no longer there. Thereafter it was only superior mobility, better tactics and precise usage of artillery that mattered. The very same weather conditions that affected military movement did not hinder the Tigers. Also the LTTE allowed retreating soldiers an escape route in most cases instead of trying to surround and decimate them totally. This led to most soldiers opting to run away rather than fight. It must be noted that in many earlier operations the denial of escape routes by the Tigers contributed to soldiers rallying and fighting literally a for survival thereby hampering LTTE objectives.

Another area where the LTTE made an impact was Weli Oya or Manal Aaru. This strategic region was carved out with the objective of interdicting the territorial contiguity of the northern and eastern provinces by the UNP. The PA government after initial successes of Jayasikurui had embarked on a scheme of colonising armed settlers and establishing a network of camps. It must be remembered that Tamil inhabitants of this area were driven away in a systemic form of ethnic cleansing. The LTTE has succeeded in destroying several camps in Weli Oya and continues to pressurise the region. More than seven thousand Sinhala settlers have fled the area.

Vavuniya the southernmost town of the northern province too is under threat. The LTTE announced that it was going to shell the town and asked residents to move away. This led to about tens of thousands people abandoning the town. But there are signs of several returning. The armed forces are gathering in large numbers in Vavuniya transforming it into another garrison town. The objectives of the LTTE in triggering off such an exodus is yet to be revealed.

Military Resilience

The major consequence of this military campaign is that the LTTE has demonstrated its military resilience once again. The government's "War for Peace" exercise stands exposed as non-workable. Even if subsequently the Tigers are compelled to relinquish the newly taken territory it has very effectively made the point that it simply cannot be undermined gradually. Also no strategy based on the ephemeral conquest of territory is workable as all matters are fluid. As such new, bold and creative alternatives for a resolution of the conflict will have to be found in the long term. But in the short term fighting will continue.

The LTTE offered very little resistance for the greater part of this year when the armed forces grabbed a lot of territory with very little fighting. The LTTE strategy was perplexing. Nevertheless with the wisdom of hindsight it is discernible now that those tactics allowed the army to spread thin. At the same time the Tigers gained time to prepare themselves for a major onslaught. One thing that was clear then was that the LTTE leader Prabakharan had to accomplish some spectacular military feat in order to explain away his lack of resistance then. This he has done with a big bang now! But now it is Kumaratunge's turn to explain the debacle. With a Presidential elections around the corner she is constrained to launch some dramatic counter attack if possible. Though a risky and from a humanitarian perspective a totally unacceptable option, there does not seem to be any other way out for her. So the cycle of violence will continue. Whether ebb or tide waves are unceasingly endless. Ceaseless always! •

Presidential Election, Outcome Unpredictable

From our Colombo Correspondent

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga shocked the nation and some of her ministers on October 20 by calling for an early Presidential election invoking a provision in the J.R. Jayewardene constitution, which she vowed to jettison in her 1994 election campaign. Addressing the nation that night she said her government had fulfilled most of the pledges it gave in five years instead of the six allotted to it under the constitution.

She asked a fresh mandate from the people to find solution to the only remaining hurdle, the ethnic problem. She said she would have found a political solution if only the United National Party had helped her to pass into law her government's constitutional proposals she had placed before the people on 3 August 1995. She accused the UNP of delaying the solution by refusing to co-operate with her. "We need to throw away the present constitution to solve the ethnic problem. We need the people's support to change the constitution. If the people rally round us we shall be able to solve the national crisis without delay and march towards prosperity," she declared.

President Kumaratunga carefully prepared the ground for her proclamation with a letter she wrote to UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe on October 12 in which she heaped all the blame on him for failing to help her to end the war by his persistent refusal to support her political package or by presenting to the country an alternate proposal. He accusation was true because the UNP had on 14 October 1987, the day Justice, Constitutional Affairs, Ethnic Affairs and National Integration Prof. G.L. Peiris submitted the Government's Constitutional Proposals to parliament, submitted a rider pointing out the five areas in which the UNP differed promising to present its views

President Chandrika Kumaratunga

on those matters within three months. It failed to honour that undertaking.

There was intense speculation about the cause for the sudden call for the Presidential election, 16 months before the due date. Some journalists speculated the projected sharp decline in the economy as the probable reason. Others said the President wanted to cash in the growing desire for peace among the Sinhala people and on the unpreparedness of the UNP. The real reason came out from the President when the cabinet met on October 22 to approve President's poll decision.

She revealed the information she had received about a political conspiracy by some of her ministers to defeat the government by voting against the budget and her call for Presidential election had defeated their designs. She told the ministers that a similar revolt had brought down her mother Sirima Bandaranaike's SLFP government in 1964. "I don't want C.P.de Silvas in my government to succeed," she had said. C P de Silva the then deputy leader of the party and a cabinet minister crossed over to the opposition and voted against the government bringing about its defeat on a confidence vote.

There was a serious dispute between President Kumaratunga and some of her senior ministers about the holding of the Presidential election. They feared that a strengthened President would not give them nominations at the next parliamentary elections. It seemed that the President wanted to do just that.

It appears that the President consulted only minister Anurutha Ratwatte, Mangala Samaraweera and S.B. Dissanayake on calling a snap Presidential election. The decision was kept a top secret and others knew about it only after it was announced in the media. Tourism Minister and Sri Lanka Freedom Party general secretary was informed of the proclamation by his ministry secretary when he went to his ministry. A colleague in the UNP informed another senior minister.

The President and her ministerial confidantes are now hammering Ranil Wickremesinghe and the LTTE as standing in the way of a political solution to the ethnic problem. They are trying to show the Sinhala people that there is a conspiracy between Ranil Wickremesinghe and Pirabhakaran to defeat the President. Mangala Samaraweera had told several meetings that Ranil Wickremesinghe had become the agent of Pirabhakaran.

At the October 22 cabinet meeting all the constituent parties of the People's Alliance pledged their support to the President. Ceylon Workers Congress leader Savumiyamoorthy Thondaman who pledged his full support to her proposed a resolution supporting her decision to hold the Presidential election before the parliamentary poll. Thondaman was at odds with Plantations Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake who supported the holding of the parliamentary polls first. A kingmaker that he was, Thondaman wanted to get closer to President Chandrika Kumaratunga and undertook to lead a sustained election campaign. But he is no longer there to keep his promise. Thondaman was in Nuwera Eliya on October 30 to canvas the support of the Inthiya Vamsavali Makkal Perani when he suffered a massive heart attack and died though rushed by a helicopter to Sri jayawardhenapura Hospital.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga and her government acted fast to win the sympathy of the Indian Tamil community. Thondaman's death caused an

instant and unrestrained emotional outburst among the Indian Tamil community who flocked in thousands to pay him their last respects. Bradman Weerakoon who had served several prime ministers and Presidents as secretary and who had seen the funerals of D.S. Senanayake, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Dudley Senanayake and Vijaya Kumaratunga said: " People came because of genuine feeling."

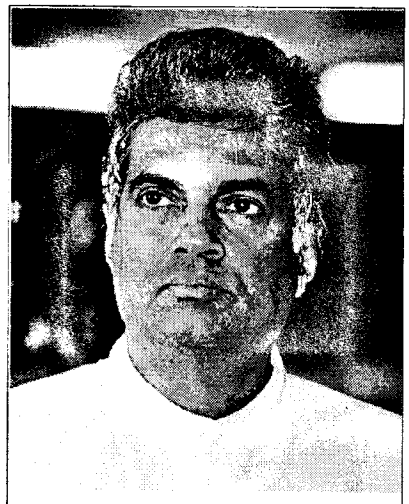
Arumugam Thondaman has taken over the leadership of the CWC. He has been appointed to the portfolio that his grandfather held and has pledged full support to the President. Thondaman's death has knit the Indian Tamils emotionally and they feel indebted to President Chandrika Kumaratunga for according their late leader a state funeral, the only Tamil to receive one. It would take some time for divisive forces within the CWC to surface.

Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader minister M.H.M. Ashraff too has pledged his support to the President. Eastern Muslim vote bank, though riven by divisions, will be with President Kumaratunga.

She is wooing the Colombo and Jaffna Tamil votes through several means. On the Dipavali day she had a satellite video conference with a cross section of the people of Jaffna where she declared her anxiety to usher in peace. She said she wanted every citizen, Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim or Burgher, to be treated as equals. She has arranged another similar conference with the Colombo Tamils.

She is also trying to win some Jaffna votes through the E.P.D.P. She had a meeting with the EPDP general secretary Douglas Devananda on November 5 where she requested its help. "Madam! How can we go to the people when your administration is not doing anything to serve the people?" Devananda is said to have asked. "What can I do? LTTE is not allowing the local bodies to function?" she asked. "We are asking for an interim administration. You are not giving?" Devananda said. She replied: "TULF is opposing that. What can I do?" Devananda said: "TULF is not going to give you votes. They are saying that they will be neutral."

President Kumaratunga yielded. She announced that the government would appoint an advisory council and a managing council in the northeast province to assist the Governor to identify and issue development projects. TULF immediately wrote to the President opposing such a council and announced that it would not take part. PLOTE, EPRLF and TELO too announced their opposition. SLMC



Ranil Wickremesinghe

said it would participate if only the EPDP is not given control of it. TULF will be staging a satyagraha highlighting the fact that the government is not giving the Jaffna Municipal council finance and facilities to enable it to function. They have pointed out that the Jaffna M.C. was not given vehicles whereas the Predeshiya Sabas controlled by the EPDP had been given.

Disunity and rivalry among Tamil parties also surfaced during the attempt by the All Ceylon Tamil Congress chief Kumar Ponnambalam to field a common Tamil candidate to signify Tamil protest to the Sinhala people and the world against the two main Presidential candidates for their failure to come forward to end the war and to bring an honourable end to the ethnic conflict. The meeting that was held at Kumar's Queen's Road home was attended by PLOTE, EPRLF and TELO. TULF and EPDP kept out. Kumar was asked to contest which he later declined mainly because the LTTE approval for his candidature was reportedly refused. That amply demonstrated failure of an alternative Tamil leadership with which could be considered or consulted during any negotiations.

The LTTE assault that began on the early hours of November 2 has effectively made the Tigers the only factor to be taken into consideration. Attacking Oddusuddan from the rear they smashed the base in just nine hours and dividing themselves into two wings they smashed Nedunkerni, Karipaddamurippu, Olumadu, Ampagamam, Mankulam, Kanagarayan Kulam and Puliyan Kulam in just four days. When this was written Tiger fighters are threatening Manal Aru (WaliOya in the east, Vavuniya in the south and Moonrumurippu in the west.

At the same time the LTTE had asked the residents of Vavuniya to move to Assikkulam and Rajendrakulam for safety as they intended shelling the town where the army is now being concentrated. The police and the army asked the people not to move and guaranteed their safety. Deputy Defence Minister Anurutha Ratwatte said the army had taken precaution to defend Vavuniya and it was moving to Puliankulam to recapture it. But reports indicate that people living in the northern villages of Vavuniya had begun to move to the safe areas with small parcels.

At Manal Aru also the situation was volatile with the Tigers poised to move further south. Over 12,000 persons had left their villages and more are continuing to do so. How the situation would turn is uncertain.

While military debacle was taking place in the jungles of Vanni President Chandrika was concerned about encouraging defections in the UNP. Preparations for this were going on for some time. The disgruntled lot in the UNP, which was marginalized by Ranil Wickremesinghe in his apparent effort to bring in new blood and a fresh image to the party tried its best to topple him from leadership. Failing in that attempt it negotiated through the political Buddhist monk Elle Gunawansa, a hand suspected of being behind the 1983 July riots, with minister S.B. Dissanayake to join the government and support the President during the elections. The monk extracted a promise of three ministries for the rebel group. The widely televised cross -over was enacted on Thursday, November 4, at the auspicious 7.14 a.m. On Tuesday, November 9, Dr. Sarath Amunugama and Nanda Mathew were appointed Ministers of Special Assignments. Wijayapala Mendis had declined to accept an offer a

ministerial portfolio.

Analysts think that this cross-over would benefit the President though the UNP is showing that the desertion of the defectors would clean it up of the corrupt and racist elements. By racist elements it means the Susil Munasinghr - Dr. Stanley Kalpage group which allegedly have close links with the Veera Vithana Movement, an extremist chauvinist group.

The advantage gained by the PA by the defection in the UNP, analysts say, would be offset by the military debacle. Even though the general Sinhala public has not yet begun to react against the government the families of the soldiers have begun to raise their voice in protest. Many of them were flocking to the military camps and offices asking for information about their solider sons and relatives. They do not believe the statistics trotted out by the President and Ratwatte that only 101 soldiers died during the LTTE onslaught. Their votes are bound to go against the President.

Ranil Wickremesinghe, though considered a weak and indecisive leader who lacks charisma, has started an aggressive campaign. With the solid UNP base of around 30 to 35 percent of the electorate firmly behind him he is currently concentrating on winning the peace constituency and the Tamil and Muslim minority votes. In a significant speech delivered on recently he had vowed to start talking to the LTTE immediately after he was sworn in as the President and declare a ceasefire. He said that he would set stop the war and set up an interim administration in the north-east and, if the LTTE is agreeable, allow it to manage it for two years within which time frame he hoped to work out an agreeable permanent solution to the ethnic problem. Many feel this offer is the best the Tamils have had so far and it may, if pushed properly, attract considerable Tamil votes. Tamils, some intellectuals feel, should get out of the negative politics they had become accustomed to, and learn to make use of the vote as a weapon, the way Thondaman used it. Vote can also be another front in the battle to win the rights of the Tamils, in certain circumstance more effective and less destructive than the gun.

In the 1994 presidential election, no one doubted that Chandrika would emerge victorious. But this time, the outcome remains unpredictable. •

Thondaman: State Funeral at Independece Square

The body of Sri Lankan Minister and Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) leader Savumyamurthy Thondaman was cremated to rest at the city's Independent Square in Colombo on 4 November.

The funeral procession led by the "Ransivige" which, carrying the body of the most revered leader of the plantation Tamils of Indian origin, left the CWC headquarters at 3 pm and reached Independence Square for the final funeral rites around 4.30 pm. Enroute to the Independence Square an Air Force helicopter dropped flowers on the path of the procession.

The unique and remarkable role that Thondaman had played in the island's annals was respectfully recognised and recorded by being accorded a State funeral in the presence of a large gathering, including foreign diplomats and local dignitaries.

After the casket bearing the remains was placed on a red-carpeted platform, Army, Navy and Air Force guards stood vigil on the four corners of the casket in turn.

Among the VIPs who were pre-sent at the Independence Square to bid farewell to the departed leader were several Ministers of the Cabinet, Leader of the Opposition and UNP, Ranil Wickremesinghe, office-bearers of the Ceylon Workers Congress, members of the Colombo-based Diplomatic Corps, members of the late Thondaman's family, representatives of the trade unions and Non Governmental Oro-anisations, delegates of the Gove-rnment of India and members of the clergy, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Islamic. Minister of State for External Affairs Ajit Kumar Panja and Tamil Nadu Minister for Highways and Ports Pasumpon Kiruttinan attended the funeral representing the Government of India.

Funeral orations were made by Leader of the Opposition Ranil Wickremesinghe, Minister of Samurdhi, Youth Affairs and Sports S. B. Dissanayake, Minister of Tourism and Aviation, Dharmasiri Senanayake, Minister of Ports Development, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (East) M. H. M. Ashraff, the Indian delegates, TULF's Joseph Pararajasingham, PLOTE's Balachandran, Minister Alavi Mowlana, President Planters' Association Mahendra Amarasuriya and P. P. Devaraj MP (CWC).

Tens of thousands of plantation workers from the upcountry areas, for whose rights Thondaman had toiled tirelessly for decades and won, streamed through the funeral site to pay their last respects. Most of them wept silently, but for some women grief was to much to bear they wept openly when the body of their fatherly leader was deposited in an all white three-tier pyre.

Thondaman is the first Tamil leader who was cremated at the Inde-

pendent Square, where the country's national leaders like R Premadasa, J R Jayewardene and Dr N M Perera have been cremated in the past.

Thondaman, Minister for Livestock Development and Infrastructure and CWC leader, who died of heart attack on October 30, and was the longest-serving Minister, having worked in several administrations since 1974.

Thondaman Honoured

President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Speaker of Parliament K. B. Ratnayake and Ministers and MPs paid their last respects to late S. Thon-daman Minister of Livestock Development and Rural Infrastructure, whose body was brought to Parliament on the afternoon of 3 November. Thondaman was the senior most parliamentarian having entered the august assembly in 1947 passed away at the age of eighty six on October 30.

His body was brought to Colo-mbo on 2 November from Kotagala, his home town, in the central high-lands of the island.

Sharp at 3.00 p.m. the motorcade with his body arrived at the VIP entrance to the Parliament and was received by the Speaker and toprungers of Ceylon Workers Congress of which the late Thondaman was the unchallenged leader from 1947.

The casket bearing his body was draped by a full sized CWC flag. The motorcade which brought his body flew CWC's trycolour flag with the emblem of the rising sun and white flags.

The road leading to the Parli-ament, the parliamentary Drive and the precincts of the Parliament all flew white flags. The casket placed on a trolley was pushed along by the late parliamentarians colleagues, over red carpet to the Ceremonial Hall where his body was lying for one hour to pay last res-pects.

Headed by the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Deputy Chairman of Committees, Leader of the Opposition, Ministers, and other parliamentarians paid good-bye to their departed colleague. They were followed by members of the Colombo based diplomatic Corps who had been invited by the Speaker to witness the solemn occasion.

President Kumaratunga arrived laid a garland of jasmine on the re-mains of the late Thondaman. Among those present on the occasion were family members of Thondaman including his son, Ramanathan Thonda-man and top leaders of the Ceylon Workers Congress.

Justice, Constitutional Affairs, Ethnic Affairs and National Integration Minister and Deputy Finance Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister of Irrigation and Power and Deputy Minister Defence Gen. Anuruddha Ratwatte, Minister of Indus-trial Development C. V. Gooneratne, Transport and Highways Minister A. H. M. Fowzie, Education and Higher Education Minister Richard Pathi-rana, Minister of Tourism and Aviat-ion Dharmasiri Senanayake, Minister of Posts Telecommunication and Media Mangala Samaraweera and sever-al other ministers, deputy ministers and other parliamentarians both governme-nt and opposition were pre-sent. •

Thondaman Among Rulers

The remains of Livestock Development and Estate Infrastructure Minister and Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) Leader Saumyamoorthy Thondaman will be consumed in flames with state honours at Independence Square this evening (4 November 1999) far away from the hills where his power base lay but right at the centre where he wielded much power and influence derived from the workers of the plantations who looked up to him as their liberator.

Saumyamoorthy Thondaman did not suffer any delusions of grandeur although by the time he arrived in Ceylon as an eleven-year-old in 1924 his father had prospered to acquire a tea plantation and was a proud owner of a car in which father and son motored up to Ramboda from Gampola railway station where father had gone down to meet the son. It was as the son of a wealthy plantation owner that the future champion of the underdog plantation worker that Saumyamoorthy, later Thondaman, set foot in Ceylon. So, the young Thondaman had no rivals to challenge him as he carved out a niche for himself as the liberator of his people.

If at all, it was the anti-Indianism of designing politicians of pre-Independent Ceylon that provided him space to lead his people from the bondage of squalor and hard labour that was the norm on the plantations und-er the British Raj. But his lifelong mission of ameliorating the conditions of the plantation worker was contained within the parameters of national independence and then national unity.

He was firmly on the side of non-violent campaigners and resorted to the ultimate weapons of strike action when negotiations failed to move the estate management to accede to dem-ands of increase in meagre wages and the betterment of squalid conditions of barracklike line rooms with no sanitation that the 'coolies' had to put up with to produce the very life blood of the economy at that time.

Thondaman made no elaborate claims to formal education but had had a multiplicity of experiences from which he benefited and singularly committed himself to the cause of the exploited plantation worker. It was as Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Gampola Branch of the Ceylon Indian Congress in 1940 that the future Cabinet Minister of successive governments launched his political career. From then onwards, from controversy to controversy and crisis to crisis Thondaman gambolled along until he was firmly entrenched as a kingmaker in an era of coalition politics, reflecting the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual plural society that has now been recognised as the reality in our country.

History records that a Thonda-man, a military commander of the Chol-a period had arrived in the North of Ceylon in 1070 on a peaceful mission of trading in salt and a canal built to reach the salterns was named Thondaimanaru.

The Thondaman clan was known to associate with rulers even in the dim and distant past. As it was then at the onset of the millennium, Saumyamoorthy rounded off the end of the millennium at the very centre of power and sat in Cabinet with the 'rulers' of today. It is no aberration then that he is to be cremated at Independence Square the venue of cremations of many a public figure.

(Editorial, The Observer, 4 November 1999)

Patriarch of the Plantations Passes into History

D B S Jeyaraj

Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman undisputed leader of sri lanka's predominantly Indian Tamil plantation proletariat has passed away. At 86 he was both the Sri Lankan cabinet's oldest member as well as its seniormost minister having served - except for a brief two months in 94 - continuously for 21 years from 1978 under presidents Jayewardene, Premadasa. Wijetunge and now Kumaratunge as her minister of Livestock development and infrastructure.The respected leader of Sri Lanka's Indian Tamils died at 8.12 pm on Saturday October 30th at the Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital of a myocardiac infarction.Taken ill seriously at Nuwara Eliya in the Central Highlands, he had been brought by helicopter to Colombo in the afternoon of the same day.Thondaman had gone to Nuwara Eliya the previous night and was staying at the Grand hotel.He was scheduled to preside over a meeting of the Indian Vamsaavali Makkal Perani and confirm extending support to Chandrika Kumaratunge at the Presidential elections.The fateful morning of 30th found him experiencing breathing difficulties.He was rushed to the intensive care unit of the Nuwara Eliya hospital and from there to Jayawardenepura by air.After showing signs of recovery in the evening he suffered a relapse and died peacefully in bed. Though family members wanted to fly him over to Chennai for advanced medical treatment doctors in Colombo refused it on the grounds of his fragile health.

It was only some months ago that politicians and commentators in Colombo had been decrying Thondaman as a spent force in politics. It was said that he had lost his charismatic hold over the Indian Tamil masses. After death however Thondaman acquired a larger than life image. Genuine outpourings of grief was visible among the Up Country Tamils. Large crowds paid homage wherever his body lay in state. People lined up the routes along which the cortege was taken by motorcade. Flags and thoranams, posters and hand bills were abundantly omnipresent. More than a lakh of people participated in the final journey from the CWC office "Saumiya Bhavan" in Colpetty to Independence square. The funeral was televised and broadcast live. Thondaman was the first Tamil to be given a state funeral with full honours.

His Methodology

The glowing tributes being paid to Thondaman are indicative of the appreciation and recognition of the constructive role played by him in contemporary Sri Lanka. The following quotes by Dr. Martin Luther King illustrate the essence of Thondaman's vocation and the methodology adopted by him to fulfil his mission: "In a multiracial society no group can make it alone. It is a myth to believe that the Irish, Italians and the Jews..... rose to power through separatism..... Their group unity was always enlarged by joining in alliances with other groups such as political machines and trade unions.... To play our role fully as negros we will have to strive for enhance representation and influence in the labour movement. Our young people need to think of union careers as earnestly as they do of business careers and profession."

"Nelson Mandela of Sri Lanka" is one of the many encomiums heaped on Thondaman after his death. It would be more appropriate to compare him with Martin Luther King. Mandela inspired and symbolised the aspirations and hopes of the oppressed black people of South Africa who were the majority with greater historical claim to the country. King on the other hand fought for the black people of the USA who had been brought as slaves to work on the cotton plantations. They were an oppressed lot without political, economic and social rights. King espoused non-violent struggle to win these rights and integrate with White america on equal terms.This was very similiar to the Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka for whose upliftment Thondaman strove for. Brought here originally as "coolies" they were very much the modern slaves of Lanka and were deprived of political, economic and to a lesser extent social rights. Thondaman's historical role was providing leadership and guidance to these wretched of the plantation earth to emancipate themselves from political and economic injustice and integrate with the rest of Sri Lanka as equals. Thondaman shared King's dream. It was like King's in the USA, a vision of "belonging" for his people, in Sri Lanka.

It was the fate of Sri Lankan Tamils as well as the Tamils of recent Indian origin to face racial discrimination bordering on oppression at the hands of the Sinhala majority that gained political power after the dawn of Independence. Unlike the Sri Lankan Tamils the Indian Tamils lived among the Sinhala people without any claim of territorial enclaves. They were educationally and economically backward. It should be noted that the Jaffna Tamils looked down upon and kept their "respectable" distance from the Indian Tamils. Also they became "non persons" with the deprivation of their citizenship and voting rights soon after Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. That these rights were deprived from them with the full support of the then dominant Tamil political party, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress led by its then leader, G G Ponnambalam should not be forgotten.

The inherent and contrived differences between Sri Lanka Tamils and the Indian Tamils helped shape the policies and strategies adopted by both communities to achieve equal rights. The Sri Lankan Tamil leadership followed a policy of exclusion through confrontation and secession that ultimately led to an an armed struggle for liberation. The Indian Tamils under Thondaman followed within non-violent parameters an emancipatory struggle aimed at inclusion via co-operation and integration.

The irony however was in the different responses by the Sinhala polity to the expectations and demands from both these Tamil communities in the past.. The Sri Lankan Tamils wanting to separate were told you are an integral part of Lanka and you cannot be

allowed to secede. An all out war was launched to keep the Sri Lankan Tamils integrated to Lanka. In the process Sri Lankan Tamils have undergone much despair but nevertheless they are still viewed as an inalienable component of the country.

The Indian Tamils on the other hand want very much to be considered an integral part of the island. But they were treated as an unwelcome alien presence and stripped of all rights. The situation is not so bad now. But there are still miles to go. The significance is in the present position of both communities.

The Sri Lankan Tamils who fought to preserve their position and rights have lost much now. Most of them are displaced from the north and east and are in the South or abroad. Their economy is in shambles with a great number reduced to poverty level as internal refugees. Their privileged place in government service and professions is a past glory. Even devolution through the provincial council scheme has not brought them any benefit. The ongoing war is diminishing the community on multiple levels. At the time of independence the Sri Lankan Tamils were perceived as a privileged minority. Post independence years for them has been a steady decline without any bright prospect in sight.

The Indian Tamils were in a pathetic plight as freedom dawned. They were decitizenised and disenfranchised. Though contributing to the economy greatly the politics of exclusion and exploitation kept them in dire straits. The literacy level was abysmally low. They were persecuted as "kallathonis" (illicit immigrants) for a long time. Large numbers were repatriated to India. They were uprooted in substantial numbers from the estates after a policy of land reform was introduced. Despite all these overwhelming odds against them the Indian Tamils have over the years progressed on the path to emancipation. Most of the injustices meted out to them have been remedied to a substantial extent. They have also been sharing political power to some extent.

This renaissance has been possible mainly because of the correct and pragmatic leadership provided by Thondaman, the patriarch of the plantations. The life and times of V.E.K.R.S. Thondaman called affectionately as Thonda by friends and Thalaiver by followers has been intertwined with the vicissitudes of the plantation proletariat. He was cremated with full state honours at the Independence square on Nov 4th. This was the first instance of a Tamil being awarded that honour in fifty- one years of Independence. This is both a symbolic acknowledgement of the Indian Tamil community's empowerment as well as a salutary tribute to Thondaman's positive role in it.

Born in 1913 the political veteran had celebrated his 86th birthday exactly two months ago on August 30th. Thondaman's father Karuppiah Thondaman was connected to the royal family of Puduukkotai in South India. This branch of the family however underwent a decline in fortunes and was on the verge of poverty. So Karuppiah migrated to Ceylon as it was called by the British as a "Kankani" or Supervisor of tea estate workers. Through hard work and shrewd business acumen he became owner of a prosperous tea plantation - Wavendon estate in Ramboda in the Gampola area. Young Thondaman was born in Munappudoor formerly of Ramnad and presently of Pudukkottai district in Tamil Nadu. He came over to Lanka at the age of 11. He had his secondary schooling at St. Andrews, Gampola. He then took to planting as estate management was then known. In his late teens and early twenties Thondaman led the life of a brown sahib as the son and heir of a prosperous plantation owner.

There was however an idealist streak in the younger Thondaman who was not content to lead a luxurious life as estate proprietor. Instead he chose to espouse the cause of the plantation workers who were exploited ruthlessly. The bulk of these workers were Tamils brought as indentured labourers from the then Madras Presidency. Thondaman and other like-minded idealists began organising the plantation workers to trade unions. But he was not the pioneer in the field. That honour went to Natesa Aiyer. The Indian Freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi also had a demonstrable impact on him. Thondaman forsook imported clothing and began wearing "khaddar" or handloom cloth.

The Indian community in Sri Lanka guided by another stalwart of the Indian freedom movement, Jawaharlal Nehru, acted on his advice and declared itself formallly as the Ceylon Indian Congress on July 25th 1939. The inspiration for the nomenclature was of course the Indian National Congress. Thondaman himself was not a founder member of the CIC which was the precursor to the present day Ceylon Workers Congress. The CIC initially comprised a membership of trade and commercial interests. A plantation trade union division of the CIC was also formed that year. The war years saw trade unionism taking firm root in the estates.

The CIC achieved rapid growth. Thondaman possessing a car was of immense value in recruiting members. Much of it was done clandestinely as planters were opposed to their employers joining trade unions. A car served to both impress workers as well as beat a hasty retreat when required. Thondaman also spent his own money to finance localised strikes at times. The CIC developed into a formidable organisation by the time of Independence with Thondaman as a frontline leader along with others like Azeez, Motha, Velupillai, Subbiah, Rajalingam, Vellaiyan etc.

The 1947 elections saw eight persons representing Plantation Tamil interests being returned to the first Parliament. Of these six were from the CIC. Thondaman himself won the Nuwara Eliya seat with a majority of 6135. In addition Tamil workers helped influence results in a further 12 electorates in favour of the left political parties which were also in the forefront of fighting for workers rights. The Parliament at that time had only 95 elected members and 6 appointed members. Interestingly the octogenarian Thondaman was the only member from that first Parliament to be a member of the current Parliament.

The UNP government under D.S. Senanayake felt threatened on class and ethnic lines by this "alien presence" in their midst. Legislation was introduced to deprive the Indian Tamil community of citizenship and franchise in 1948 and 49. Thondaman and other Indian Tamil leaders inspired greatly by the Gandhian ethos chose to combat these blatantly discriminatory measures by resorting to non-violent methods. There was also some confusion in their response. Initially they asked the workers to refrain from applying afresh for citizenship. Later they dropped this boycott campaign and wanted the people to apply formally. A satyagraha campaign was also launched but called off after eight months. The stringent requirements imposed for citizenship

eligibility and the strict enforcement of rules when processing applications saw only about 5% of the Indian Tamils getting citizenship.

The CIC itself transformed itself into the Ceylon Workers Congress in 1950. With the deprivation of voting rights for almost the entirety of the Indian Tamils, the CWC became more of a trade union with a political wing than a political party with a trade union. No member of the CWC was elected to Parliament in the fifties. In 1960 July Thondaman became an appointed MP under Sirima Bandaranaike's government. He represented the hill country Tamil category known as "stateless" being neither Ceylonese nor Indian citizens. This was estimated to be around a million at that time. The worst however was yet to come.

In October 1964 former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike signed an accord that arbitrarily determined the future of these so called stateless persons. The Indo-Ceylon agreement or Sirima-Shastri pact as it was called popularly, divided the stateless on a ratio of seven to four between India and Sri Lanka respectively. Out of the estimated 975,000 stateless persons 525,000 were to be repatriated to India while 300,000 were to be granted Sri Lankan citizenship. The fate of another 150,000 was kept in abeyance. Subsequently in 1974 Mrs Bandaranaike and Indira Gandhi signed another accord dividing the residue equally as 75,000 each between both countries. Thus the final quota was 600,000 to India and 375,000 to Sri Lanka.

The tragic dimension to this exercise was that the affected people or the CWC representing the stateless persons was not consulted .Still Thondaman did not oppose overtly the government responsible for this sad situation. Angered over these developments Thondaman abstained from voting either for or against Mrs. Bandaranaike's government whensome dissident government MPs led by CP de Silva joined the opposition United National Party MPs to vote against the government in a confindence vote in December 1964. This brought about government's downfall by one vote(73 - 74). The incident also spotlighted the political animal that was Thondaman. Instead of striking out against the government openly in opposition to the Sirima - Shastri pact and be politically isolated he chose to bide his time and team up with other Sinhala MPs on the question of press freedom at the opportune moment and helped deliver the coup de grace.

1965 saw Thondaman becoming an appointed MP along with Annamalai in the UNP government of Dudley Senanayake. He used the opportunity to delay repatriation of the "stateless persons"while encouraging the process of their re-enfranchisement. The Indo - Ceylon Agreement (Implementation) Act was passed during Senanayake's regime. This linked the granting of citizenship on a corresponding ratio to that of India's acceptance of repatriates. Behind the scenes, Thondaman used his influence with Delhi to slow down the acceptance of repatriates. He is reported to have boasted to a political scientist once that he had single handedly nullified an agreement entered into by two sovereign governments.

The return of Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1970 saw a reversal of this state of affairs again. Families were uprooted and in many instances divided through compulsory repatriation. Also the nationalisation of plantations saw many

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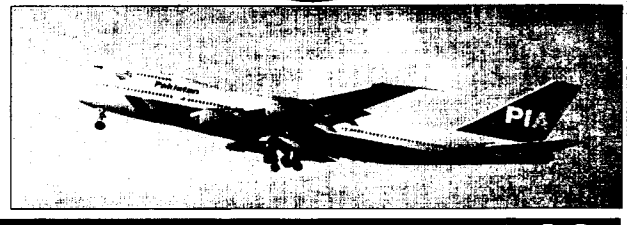

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Indian Tamils being evicted from the estates and landless Sinhala people being settled. Large numbers relocated themselves to the Sri Lanka Tamil districts of the North and East to find work or sustain themselves. In spite of dire economic circumstances there was a silver lining, a silent revolution was in progress within the community.

More and more Indian Tamils were regaining citizenship and consequent voting rights. As more and more children grew up and reached the voting age of 18 the voter strength of the community increased. This electoral empowerment was realised first in the 1977 elections when after 30 years Thondaman was re-elected to Parliament as the third member to the now multi-member constituency of Nuwaraeliya-Maskeliya with a majority of 32,717. The Indian Tamils had come out of the political wilderness after 25 years by gaining elected representation in Sri Lanka's parliament. In 1989 the CWC had three and in 1994 nine MPs. Thondaman himself was appointed as national list MP in 89 and 94. He participated as a member of the Parliamentary Select committee that drafted the new Constitution of the UNP government of J R Jayawardene in 1978. He used his influence as much as possible to gain concessions. The TULF representing the Sri Lanka Tamils refused to participate in the constitution-making process.

The new constitution of 1978 removed the distinctions between citizens by descent and citizens by registration. This removed the stigma of second class citizenship. The 40 year old ban on plantation Tamils voting in local government elections was also removed. Also the Tamil language was declared a national language. These measures many of the grievances and problems faced by Indian Tamils.

In the August 1977 elections, the TULF representing the Sri Lanka Tamils became the second largest party in parliament, and its then leader Amirthalingam had tried to persuade Thondaman to accept the post of Opposition Leader in parliament on grounds of his seniority. But Thonda declined. In 1978 after the new Constitution came into force he joined the JR Jayewardene government and was appointed to the cabinet as Rural Industrial Development Minister, the first Indian Tamil to get a cabinet portfolio after Independence.

This columnist gained an insight into the pragmatic sagacity of Thondaman on the eve of his being appointed to the cabinet. Another colleague from the "Virakesari" and I were in his office discussing his new appointment. Some of the departments, boards and corporations being assigned to him were virtual white elephants. I pointed this out and asked him why he was allowing JR to saddle him with these "burdens". He replied with twinkling eyes. First of all he pointed out that an Indian Tamil being given a portfolio was in itself a matter of objectionable controversy among chauvinist elements within and without the government. Aiming for a prestigious ministership would foment opposition. Also the minister from whom that portfolio is taken away as well as those seeking it would object and obstruct. But these boards and departments were running at a loss. They were being taken away from the Agriculture and Industries ministries respectively to create the new ministry. The ministers concerned (E L Senanayake and Cyril Mathew) were relieved that they were being removed from them. So none was protesting. "If I can make them viable and profitable I will get the credit but even if I failed to revive them no one will blame me", Thonda enlightened me then about his political approach.

As minister of Rural Industrial Development Thondaman was able to foster dairy projects and small Industries among Indian Tamils to a very great extent through institutions like the Milk Board, National Livestock Development board, Small Industries Dept etc. Cottage industries flourished in the line rooms in the estates. Almost every plantation family owned a cow and poultry. Thonda was dubbed as Mattu Manthiri" (Bovine minister) by his critics. But the people found their lot bettered. Thondaman also enabled jobs for his people cleverly without irritating the Sinhala people in the neighbourhood. Instead of talking openly about ethnic ratios he devised a fifty-fifty formula of equal shares in jobs for estate and village. Village was an euphemism for Sinhala and estate for Indian Tamil. The historically deprived plantation Tamils were being given enhanced weightage in jobs through a system of affirmative action without unnecessary friction.

Thondaman's greatest triumph was perhaps the removal of the "Thrishanku" state of statelessness for all time. When the application registers for Indian citizenship closed, it was found that there was a 93,000 shortfall in the numbers of applicants required for Indian and a corresponding excess for Sri Lankan citizenship. Thondaman successfully persuaded the Jayawardene government to grant citizenship unilaterally to this category of 93000 and their natural increase in January 1987 thereby bringing an end to the problem of statelessness for all time. Again bureaucratic antipathy and apathy resulted in this not being implemented fully. Subsequent attempts by Thonda in late 1988 saw the process being accelerated. As Thondaman told the press then "The citizenship problem was being resolved by the very same UNP that created it." Concessions were also gained in the case of those who had obtained Indian citizenship but were staying on in the Island.

Thondaman was successful in these attempts to gain rights for his people because of many factors. Firstly the increase in votes within the community and the CWC's ability to deliver them en bloc provided Thondaman great bargaining clout. By aligning with the UNP he was able to maximise gains. Secondly the escalation of the ethnic conflict leading to armed political violence in the North-East saw the Colombo government moving closer to and awarding priority to the needs of the Indian Tamils. It wanted to prevent violence spreading into the plantations and avoid a second front to confront. Thirdly India was taking greater interest in Sri Lankan affairs thereby impelling governments to remove possible irritants pertaining to the plantation Tamil community that claimed an umbilical relationship with "mother India". Fourthly the CWC through well executed labour strikes illustrated its capability of paralysing tea and rubber production. This provided economic clout that enhanced bargaining their power. Fifthly Thondaman enjoyed close personal relations with UNP leaders of yore like Jayawardene, Premadasa, Dissanaike, Athulathmudali and Anandatissa de Alwis and used it to the advantage of his people.

The CWC contested several elections in associations with the United National Party. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement helping both parties to increase representation at multiple levels like the local

authorities, DDCs, Provincial Councils etc. in addition of course in Parliament. For the Indian Tamils it was a slow return to political representation and power after being in the cold for more than 25 years. The Indian vote also helped Jayewardene and Premadasa win the Presidential elections in 1982 and 1988.

All presidents except D B Wijeytunge who assumed office after Premadasa was assassinated treated Thondaman with respect. When this happened, the master strategist Thondaman planned to deliver a signal to DBW by trying to forge an alliance with the DUNF and SLFP to oust the UNP in the Central Provincial Council and make Gamini Dissanayake the chief minister. This was foiled by a group of dissident CWC members backed by his General Secretary M S Sellasamy who sided with the UNP. Thonda was enraged by the challenge to his hither to unquestioned leadership. But when Gamini Dissanayake rejoined the UNP Thondaman utilised the opportunity to strike rapprochement with Wijeytunge and got the UNP to discard Sellasamy. Incidentally it must be noted that all those erstwhile CWC stalwarts who rebelled against Thonda and left the organisation like Aziz, Vellaiyan, CV Velupillai, M S Sellasamy. P. Chandrasekheran, Annamalai Kathiresan, etc. failed in their bid to diminsh Thonda's position to any substantial extent.

In 1994 the CWC contested along with the UNP under the latter's symbol of elephant. Seven members were elected and two including Thondaman became eligible to be appointed as national list MP's. But the Peoples Alliance under Chandrika Kumaratunge became Prime Minister with a wafer thin majority. Thondaman then changed sides and became a minister in her cabinet. His colleagues however sat in the opposition but supported the government during voting time. There has been no parallel in such unorthodox political conduct in Parliament history.

Thondaman helped increase the landslide majority of Kumaratunge in the Presidential elections in November 1994 by once again delivering the bulk of the plantation Tamil votes. In spite of certain problems and tensions Thondaman remained supportive of Kumaratunge to the very end. When she opted for a snap election to be held on 21 December this year, the CWC decided to back her again mainly because Thondaman decided so in spite of some CWC MP's holding a different opinion. Whether this situation will continue to prevail in the aftermath of Thonda passing away is a perplexing question.

As the uncrowned king of the Indian Tamil community Thondaman enjoyed the reputation of king maker in Sri Lanka. His popularity however decreased during the held local authority polls held last year. His king maker image was under threat. But during the Provincial Council elections of April 6th this year Thondaman lived up to this sobriquet again. He floated a new configuration called the "India Vamsavali Makkal Perani" (Peoples front of Indian descent) that revolved mainly around the CWC. It won six in the Central and one each in the Uva and Sabragamuwa provinces. Again it was Thondaman who provided a narrow but nevertheless effective majority to the ruling Peoples Alliance to form viable administrations in these councils.

Thondaman was sympathetic to the problems of the Sri Lankan Tamils but knew clearly that there was no identity of interests between the two

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communities. In 1961 he brought out the plantation workers in strike as a demonstration of sympathy over the massive Satyagraha campaign undertaken by the Sri Lankan Tamils in the North and East. But despite Sri Lankan Tamil expectations that he would prolong the strike he called it off early after making his point. He co-operated with Sri Lankan Tamil political parties in forming the Tamil United Front in 1971. But when it metamorphosed into the Tamil United Liberation Front and opted for a separate state in 1976 he cried off despite being elected as one of the triumvirate of its leaders. Tamil Eelam will not help resolve the problems of plantation Tamils was his practical credo. He campaigned for the TULF in 1977 and enlisted TULF support for the CWC in elections but contested separately under the cockerel symbol instead of rising sun of the TULF. In the all party Conference of 1984 it was the CWC that placed the TULF proposals as its own.

He was also critical of the confrontational tactics of Sri Lankan Tamils both of a violent and non - violent mode. He used to tell me several times that the trouble with TULF leaders was that they never knew how to negotiate. "The art is to put five demands, win one completely, gain partial compromises on two and put on hold the remaining two for another day. You can't get everything in one shot. Since we are trade unionists we know that art well. But TULF leaders are all lawyers who only know to argue their brief eloquently but not how to extract concessions".

Thondaman was not overtly critical of the LTTE or the armed Tamil struggle. His pragmatic proposal that power should be handed over to Prabakharan for a stipulated period of time without being obligated to face elections was thoroughly misunderstood in the South. It was based on the model of India's agreement with Lal Denga in Mizoram where the administration was handed over to the Mizo leader without elections for a while as a preclude to a settlement. He was accused unfairly of collaborating with the LTTE in creating a "Malaya Naadu" in the central highlands. But in practice Thondaman strove hard to prevent violence entering the plantations. He knew that if the up country youth started emulating their North - eastern counterparts only tragedy could occur. He approved of violence only as a means of self-defence. Thondaman was instrumental in preventing violence overwhelming the plantations. His importance will be felt only in his absence.

He also had an earthy way of describing when to call off a strike and go in for a negotiated agreement. The comparison was to the cooking of Dosa or Thosai a staple Tamilian food item."the cook has to flip flop the flour alternately on the cooking tray so that both sides will get appropriately heated. At the right moment it has to be taken off. If this "Pakkuvam" (finesse) is not adhered to the Dosa will be either burnt or not cooked well on one side. It is this "pakkuvam" of timing that is required when conducting strikes and negotiations. If the correct moment is not seized everything would be lost."

His politics was that of brinkmanship at times. There was however a subtle depth to it. A major example was the plantation strike he launched in 1984 for wage increases while being a minister in strongman JR Jayewardene's government. After the 1980 fiasco of the government servants' strike which led to the dismissal of tens of thousands of emplyees, no strike of workers was expected to succeed. Besides Thonda was on fragile ground being a minister of the government he was opposing. "It was not a strike," Thondaman said but "a prayer campaign where every worker would attend a place of worship and be there praying for a wage increase the whole day instead of working." To prevent personal pressure being exerted by Jayewardene, the wily Thondaman got himself admitted to hospital and also got a "no visitors" rule implemented. The UNP was unable to communicate with Thonda and exert pressure. The government caved into workers' demands. But there was no triumphant boast by Thondaman. "Prayers can move mountains. Our prayers have been answered," he said in deadpan tones.

He was a man who could reconcile seemingly irreconcilable contradictions. An estate owner leading plantation workers; a government minister leading a strike against his own government; contesting with the UNP on a common list in the Southern DDCs and supporting the TULF in DDC polls in the North East against the UNP; an MP elected on the UNP ticket sitting with the PA as a government minister etc. were some instances of his talent for extraordinary behaviour. When asked about these different aspects of his personality Thondaman would say with a twinkle, "I am like the ideal woman. She can be a daughter to her parents, sister to her siblings, wife to her husband, and mother to her children and still remain the same woman".

Exercising a king maker role and adopting a pragmatic approach to the dynamics of political power fuelled resentment against Thondaman in certain chauvinist quarters. The fact that an "Indian Tamil" was helping make and unmake Presidents and administrations increased these feelings. Also his role in resolving the problems of the Indian Tamil community was not fully appreciated by some sections of the community. Whatever the misgivings and misunderstandings there is no doubt that Thondaman was a leader who helped his people with single minded devotion for more than sixty years to realise their aspirations despite overwhelming odds. The passing away of the plantation Tamil patriarch would be irreplaceable in the current context. Whether there is a worthy successor to Thondaman's mantle is the unanswered question.

His grandson Arumugam Thondaman in his early thirties is both a Member of Parliament and also General Secretary of the CWC. He is tipped to be Thondaman's political heir and successor. There is speculation that the CWC may split because of the succession problem. There was a time when the CWC had a 600,000 membership. Now it has dropped to around 350,000. Still it remains a force to be reckoned with. The reason for this was the astute and bold leadership that Thondaman provided. If the CWC fragments after his demise it can only lead to the detriment of the Plantation Tamils. ●

The Thamils and Elections

Surendranath Raghavan

At the end of the 20th century, amongst many rapidly changing things, the call for freedom and democracy has intensified in an unprecedented manner. Everywhere across the globe, from the Vanni refugee camp and the boarder village of Somalia to the tribal hill of Santafe, there is common ethos echoing the demand for self-governance and practice of democracy, in socio-political and cultural affairs of these respective communities.

This cross-continent, cross-cultural phenomena belies the sceptics who have raised doubts, on the viability of liberal democracy to be a success in non-western cultures arguing it is essentially a western cultural artefact. When studying these "eastern" political gurus, one basic fact surfaces without much academic exploration. Their disappointments and dissatisfactions are based on the experience in and around their own situations. For example the situation in Sri Lanka.

There are enough reasons to argue and build counter thesis on democracy in this land during the last 51 years of post independence politics. Our history of the last half-century has a plethora of evidence on the break down and destruction of some of the fragile fabrics of democracy and civil society. Thousands killed. Billions of rupees spent on elections and administration procedures. Loss of opportunity for development and economic justice for the lower strata of society. And more significantly the nation psychologically and emotionally divided into parties, colours and slogans. Yet the paramount truth about this scenario is not that democracy has failed us. But that we have failed democracy, in the way we understood, interpreted and implemented it.

Shared Responsibility

Contrary to some popular beliefs, democracy is not an arena where every individual has the right to peruse his or her personal goal and pleasure. In democracy there is individual freedom. That is bedrock. Yet that freedom is in the total context of a shared responsibility of joining the entire society to shape the fundamental values of freedom and self-governance, for today and tomorrow.

So what failed in Sri Lanka is not democracy, but the way we practised it. Many regimes, even military dictatorships have attempted to claim popular support by "pinning" democracy labels on their collar. But, democracy - which has travelled through the human history in the hearts and intellect of many millions from ancient Athens to Thomas Jefferson to the Berlin Wall to the 'will be rules' of East Timor, will not surrender itself like a soft toy in the hands of a selfish dictator.

It is in this understanding of democracy, that one needs to check the attempts of our politicians to manipulate the will and spirit of the public consciousness. They, instead of becoming the result of the public search for proper governance, are masters of the manipulative art of misleading the masses.

Few days ago the media was full of pictures and writings of the great train ride taken by the Leader of the Opposition Ranil Wicramasinghe. What happened there during his listening project on that journey is an experience limited to the blessed commuters who shared the journey with him.

It has taken 5 long years, to take a 3 hour train trip for a leader who is asking the mandate to lead this country. I am not sure when the Leader of the Opposition took his last train trip (even for fun) in his long journey from the days of Royal College to the parliament to the Temple Trees and now to "Cambridge Place". It will be of interest to the millions who suffer daily by the delays, discomfort, dirty conditions and the all powerful strikes the CGR is known for.

The present leader of the party which over-night brought upon a BMW + Pajero culture to the politicians while the millions suffer due to lack of basic transportation yet again has demonstrated an ugly and smelling side of our political culture. Because it is this culture which justified the spending of millions of public funds to provide transport and all other facilities and made the otherwise next to nothing politician, semi-god. Why do all politicians irrespective of colour and education have come to believe that the voters of this blessed island are a mere bunch of guinea pigs to be cheated, manipulated and finally sacrificed on the alter of political power. If they come to terms with the genuine belief, that a nation - bleeding from a senseless war, which is a direct result of the misdeeds of their forerunners, need to take a sincere effort to restore and regain the meaning of nationhood, they will dare not act out these Hollywood comedies.

The Record of the Opposition

I honestly have no favours for the ruling or a special hatred for the Opposition. But the explosive capacity of racism and insincerity of the policies and practices displayed by the Opposition especially during the last 5 years haunt me.

From any angle there has been no stronger Opposition in independent Sri Lanka. The shear numbers in the parliament. The near ownership to major media channels, a sympathetic and collaborative business community (for various reasons of course!) and the experience of governance of 17 years, with this and many other talents, the average expectation is for an Opposition of political maturity and honesty.

Now that is the expectation. Yet the reality is far from that.

The record of the Opposition during the last 5 years is that of political shame and dishonesty. To an ordinary mind the list of their achievements are a few. The "Matara Oration" by one of their leading activists, which has set a record as one of the most indecent public speeches in recent times, and the pictures of the fat belly boys walking in their "amudes" in and around Town Hall, in the vicinity of major Diplomatic Missions, are two vivid memories.

The UNP which is considered to have the traditional sympathy and support of the Thamil community, especially of those living outside North and East has betrayed them in a merciless manner and in grand scale. Besides being the party, which

delivered the culture of political violence and significantly contributed to the birth of terror in Thamil politics, the Opposition also fails in many other counts:

1. The Opposition's dealing with the single major challenge of this country - to find an amicable solution to the political struggle of the Thamils has been only from a selfish angle of power gaining. During the last five years, the UNP has uttered various forms of solutions to various groups at various places. The variety is so much, one cannot keep track. Despite the Fox agreement, Select Committee and the Lalith Kothalawala initiative in all these occasion, the party as a whole did not have a clear stand or political courage the Thamils of this country are crying for. It is clear that the Opposition does not have the political will or sincerity to look at this historical issue without their coloured glass of power opportunity.

2. Thus the Thamil community is still waiting to know the actual stand of the Opposition on the issue of the political liberty of the Thamils. Because one key concern of the LTTE in terms of any future negotiations, has been that the Government and Opposition which constitutes 85% of the political will of the Sinhala Buddhists should develop one mind towards the solution. And if the UNP is sincere and seeks to win the confidence of the Thamils the best way to articulate their position should be with an unconditional apology for the failed responsibility in the case of burning the treasures in the Jaffna library and watching silently while the land was made wet with the blood of many thousand Thamils in 1983.

3. The Opposition has been good at creating a strong cry against the alleged corruption in major economic transactions like the Air Lanka, P&O, & Channel 9. But the genuineness of these claims and the supportive evidence have always failed to be authentic and did not live beyond the political gimmicks this country is known for.

4. And one could clearly see the opportunistic manner, the Opposition is acting whether it is the rights of the doctors (actually it should be the rights of the patients who pays for the education of these special category of people) reforms in education, Equal Opportunity Bill or on the statement of Kadirgamar on the issues of foreign mediation. Thamils may have given up their influence and voice in these matters. But surely they are not failing to observe the attitude taken by the Opposition.

5. Not enough all these, the Leader of the Opposition in recent TV interviews (in Sinhala) said something to the effect that he does not want to depend on the votes of the minority any more and the request was to the Sinhala community to give him a clear majority. It may be for this same reason that the silence of the Opposition has well tallied with the hatred preached by SVV and NMAT. But if the Opposition is planning to intimidate the Thamils for voting for the PA in 94, then that is pure political thuggery.

These and many other developments are important as the wind whispers a Presidential election in the near future.

Season of Election Bargains

If its going to be an election, especially a Presidential election where Ranil Wickramasinghe from UNP and Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga from PA, to contest, then the Thamils have yet again an opportunity to weigh their responsibilities in face of the political imprisonment they have fallen in.

It is no secret that the PA came to power with the promise of peace especially to the Thamils. Even after 5 years they have failed to deliver the so hoped peace to the Thamils and to the nation at large. The war continues in an intensified manner. The refugees have not gone home. There is untold suffering in the "uncleared" areas. Colombo living Thamils are at the grace of many different institutions and administrative bodies. They are threatened by the visible extremism of SVV and NMAT. Many commercial business entities have adopted a near "apartheid" in employment opportunities. Overall an average account of the PA performance does not give them credit or hope for the Thamil votes again.

The suffering Thamils and their political maturity are sure to be put into test in the above scenario.

It is important to learn lessons from the past. Especially in the art and science of political management. Gandhi, yet the model for many political tactics, has displayed the matchless maturity and wisdom in similar situations. Between 1897 and 1899 the Boer war was fought between the British and the Boers. Gandhi was in South Africa and his political struggle with British took public shape then. Yet Gandhi wrote "... my sympathy was with the Boers, but I believed that I had no rights in such cases to enforce my/our individual convictions. I have minutely dealt with the inner struggle ... My loyalty to the British rule drove me to the participation with the British in that war ... If I demanded my rights as a British citizen, it was also my duty as such to defend the British Empire. We held that India could achieve her complete emancipation only within and through the empire ..." (autobiography page 203)

This may be a century ago. Yet the end result of the political practice of Gandhi was complete freedom to India and a thirst set on fire for freedom in Asia and Africa.

Changed Times

SLFP, PA's main partner, has left racist scares in the hearts and minds of many or almost all Thamils. "Sinhala Only", "Sri" letter, 1972 constitution, 1977 riots, all these and many more are reasons to mistrust them.

But the times have changed. The SLFP, which brought acts to dismiss the Thamil Language overnight, is presenting the EOB, the SLFP that refused to support the Dudley - Chelva pact, has presented a proposal with far reaching effects and has stood by it. The SLFP, which focused on the narrow nationalistic ideologies, has embraced the validity of the market economy. A study of the cross section of the present day SLFP should reveal the fact that it is largely controlled and given leadership by a new set of individuals, who have time and again demonstrated their belief in a democratic system with equal rights for all citizens of this nation. This "post independent generation" has been able to develop their political ideologies with a more open and liberal democratic sense. They have clearly moved away from the politics of their fathers/mothers. Their outlook on religion, language and ethnicity has developed from an equality basis breaking the narrow sense of majority hegemony. If there is a possible risk for the SLFP to lose their traditional Sinhala support that is for only one reason - the SLFP taking the political

rights of the Thamils into the core agenda of their political debate. The present day SLFP has used all possible measures to deregulate the masses toward the political rights of the Thamils by deliberate debate and discussion in the national assembly on media and elsewhere. This at times with groups that are not fully convinced of the need to be so.

This is not the end story. SLFP may be yet struggling to reshape their political philosophy for the 21st century. Few founder members may find it little confusing and uncomfortable, yet the potential political honesty of this change is one that Thamils must evaluate, encourage and embrace. That political bridge of understanding with the changing psychology of the centre of Sinhala politics, is perhaps the foundation for the Thamils to build a community of Sinhalese who will recognise the legitimate rights of the Thamils.

Role of Thamils

The crisis of this nation cannot be named as a "Thamil Problem" any longer. It has developed and grown into the inner chambers of the Sinhala politics. Therefore it is more likely a "Sinhala Problem", the problem of their political consciousness whether to solve this war by recognising the political rights of the Thamils and give hope for democratic forces to deliver them from the bloody curse of terror politics. But that historical decision will come on the basis of the support and confidence that we Thamils are willing to build.

There are many who write, lecture even preach to say that the Thamils have no role in the national politics in this country. To them the fitting answer may be the words of Rajiv Gandhi who in the debate of the Indian parliament towards the Muslims said, "... Muslims are not part of India. They are India. And until they take up and play the correct political role, the Indian course in the history of mankind will not be reached ...." Though we are yet to hear that kind of a national vision in this land, it is the duty of the Sri Lankan Thamils irrespective of the place they live whether it be Jaffna, Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya, Colombo or Toronto, to accept this fact: Rights are only the fruits of a well executed responsibility.

In a famous speech at the Delhi's Jumma Masjid, a few months after the tormenting partition, Maulana Azad, a great leader of India said to the Muslims who remained on the Indian side: "... Come, let us take the pledge that nowhere else but this, is our country. We belong to her totally. And the fundamental changes of the destiny of this great nation will remain incomplete till we join hands with our brothers to reshape it".

Martin Luther King has no parallel in his politics of hope. Future will reward him for he uttered ".... I have a dream - A dream where sons of the black slaves will join hands with the daughters of the white masters and play in the foothill of Washington".

We Sri Lankan Thamils, should we or not take this opportunity in the history to design our own future? •

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Split in the UNP

The decision of several parliamtarians, provincial Councillors and academics belonging to the UNP to support Chandrika Kumaratunga in the forthcoming presidential election is considered by many political analysts as a serious blow to the UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe's chances in the forthcoming presidential election.

There have been rumours of a split for a number of weeks, but when it occurred it was larger than one suspected. It has been reported that several other UNP members at provincial and district level also have split from the UNP and joined the SLFP. For instance 73 UNPers from Kegalle joined and participated at the SLFP annual meeting held recently.

Twenty-five leading UNPers including five Members of Parliament met the President at her official residence, Temple Trees, on 5 November

Wijayapala Mendis with UNP Leader

and pledged their support for Chandrika's re-election as President. The group was led by the UNP's Kandy District MP, Dr Sarath Amunugama, and included former Ministers Wijayapala Mendis, Nanda Mathew, Colombo District MP Susil Moonesinghe, and Professor Stanley Kalpage.

Although the defectors have not resigned from the UNP, by extending support to Chnadrika in opposition to their own party leader, they have placed themselves outside the party. In fact many of them have already been expelled without even calling for an explanation from them or holding an inquiry.

Dr Sarath Amunugama is considered a price catch for the Peoples Alliance as he is well recognised intellectual. He along with the late A C S Hameed, the former UNP Foreign Minister, has been on that wing of the UNP which wanted the party to support the government's devolution proposals. At a press conference, Amunugama accused the UNP leadership for not acting in a responsible manner with regard to the devolution proposals, adding that they never appointed representatives to the Parliamentary Select Com-mittee according to the ethnic diversity in the country. He said that as the 20th century came to a close, the divisive heritage that has characterised politics in the country should be forgotten and unity must be forged devoid of race, party

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and caste differences for the common good of the country. He promised that the organisational and intellectual strength and the dedication possessed by the UNP's dissident group would be made available to President Kumaratunga as they acknowledged that she was the only national leader who was capable of solving the problems of the country.

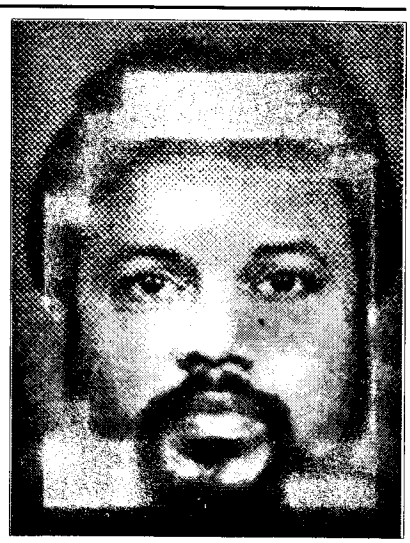
Already Sarath Amungama and Nanda Mathew have been appointed Ministers of "Special Assignments", but Wijayapala Mendis has declined to accept a ministerial appointment preferring to remain as chairman of the UNP dissident group.

There is no doubt that the split in the midst of the election campaign has weakened the UNP to some extent, and has adversely affect Ranil's electoral chances while strengthening Chandrika's. But the readiness with which some among the UNP defectors with a questionable an unsavoury past record have been embraced by the PA leadership has caused much unease among its ranks. Some of them feel that the personalities comprising the UNP's rebel group have different axes to grind and are united in one thing only, and that is they are opposed to the current leadership of the UNP headed by Ranil Wickrema-singhe who has sidelined them for various reasons. They are not a coherent group formed with an agreed set political views or approaches to the major problems currently facing the country. For example they point to the fact that while Sarath Amunugama represented the progressive wing of the UNP espousing a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict by greater devolution of powers, Susil Moonesinghe has been having a cosy relationship and collaborated with the most extreme Sinhala chauvinist groupings in the country like the Sinhala Veera Vidhana which advocates a relentless effort at continuing the ongoing war.

Sarath Amunugama

Relying on such a group of UNP dissidents to gain power, political analysts say, will only store up trouble for President Kumaratunga in the future in the event she succeeds in the presidential race. •

Mystery Surrounds EPDP MP's Killing



The killing Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) Member of Parliament for the Jaffna district and editor of the Tamil Weekly "Thinamurasu" financed by the party, A Nadarajah, remains a mystery.

The 36-year-old Atputharajah Nadarajah, also known as Ramesh among his friends, was assassinated by unidentified gunmen near Wellawatte railway station in Colombo on 2 November at about 10 am. He was travelling in his car to the "Thinamurasu"office when gunmen opened fire killing Nadarajah instantly. His driver was also killed and two passers-by were injured in the incident. The assailants whose identity remains unknown followed him and shot him at point blank range with automatic weapons.

He became an MP at the last general election held in August 1994, polling 968 votes from Kayts and Vadukkodai in the Jaffna peninsula.. Nadarajah began his politics in 1977 with a commitment to the Sri Lankan Tamil movement for self-determination, and had been active in the area of communication and propaganda from the very beginning of his involvement. After an early role in the Tamil Students' Organisation in Jaffna, he joined the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES), an off-shoot of EROS, in the 1980s, in which he showed his communicational talents by heading its propaganda unit.

With the mushrooming of numerous Tamil secessionist armed groups following the July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, Nadarajah functioned as the Political Commissar for the People's Liberation Army, a short-lived guerilla group. He later served as the secretary of the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF), which briefly functioned as the umbrella for an alliance of major Tamil militant groups: EROS, TELO, EPRLF and LTTE.

He subsequently came into prominence with the newly formed EPDP which began functioning in alliance with the Government of President Premadasa. This was the time when the other Tamil militant groups began to suffer threatened annihilation from the onslaught of the LTTE which was hell-bent on establishing itself as the "sole representative of the Tamils".

Like many other Tamil nationalist militants, Nadarajah disagreed with the LTTE's move at total domination of the Tamil political scene and so he became active along with other Tamil groups in alliance with the Government after the Tigers withdrew from talks with the Premadasa administration and the war broke out betyween the LTTE and government forces. It was following this Nadarajah worked as a broadcaster successfully conducting the Tamil language broadcast 'Makkal Kural' for the SLBC. His radio dramas ridiculed the LTTE leader depicting him as an authoritarian

monarch sitting on his throne with his servile courtiers ever ready to carry out his bidding and always singing his praises for his valour and wisdom. It is this part of his role which would have made him an eternal enemy of the LTTE leader that, some say, would have made him a prime target of the LTTE and cost him his life in spite of his pro-LTTE stance he adopted in his paper during the recent past.

The LTTE and EPDP have been bitter rivals and the former had sought at least twice to kill its leader Douglas Devananda who still suffers from the serious injuries he sustained when attacked by a group of suspected LTTE- detenus in a prison which Devananda visited at the prisoner's own request.

Though Devananda has been continuing to articulate the EPDP's anti-LTTE views openly, Nadarajah as editor of "Thinamurusu", has been using the columns of his paper to openly support the LTTE during the last two to three years to the dislike of the party leadership and in particular Douglas Devananda. Sources close to Devananda felt that he had lost control of the paper and Nadarajah had increasingly begun to challenge his leadership to the extent of even posing security threat to his life.

Some sources claimed without adducing proof that the slain MP and Editor has been involved with the LTTE for some years and that the LTTE had made available exclusive pictures and information directly to him which he used in his paper. But Nadarajah has repeatedly claimed that his paper had to take a pro-LTTE line in order to ensure better circulation. While the police authorities in Colombo blamed the LTTE for Nadarajah's assassination, some others doubted it because he was doing a great service to the LTTE through the columns of his paper.

It is said that despite his seat in parliament, Nadarajah was more a newspaperman at heart than a politician. Since he took over the editing of "Thinamurasu", he had cranked up its circulation, eventually making it the country's most widely read Tamil-language weekly tabloid. Nadarajah avoided the public spotlight and disliked being photographed and the address of his newspaper was never published and few even knew what he looked like. •

A Cloak and Dagger Operation!

The circumstances surrounding the arrest and detention of Eric Saundaranayagam, a 27 year-old Tamil person from Sri Lanka remains shrouded in mystery. The facts that have emerged so far suggest a cloak and dagger like operation in which the Sri Lankan and Tamil Nadu authorities collaborated in his being takEN into custody in Tamil Nadu and being transported to Colombo.

Saundaranayagam was wanted by the Sri Lankan police as a suspect in connection with the assassination of TULF Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam on 29 July this year by suicide bomber. Within weeks of Tiruchelvam's killing, newspaper in Colombo reported that Saundaranayagam was one of the men behind the assassination plot.

It is now authoritatively asserted that the Sri Lankan CID came to know from relatives and friends of Saundaranayagam that he had gone to Thiruvanmiyur in South India. The Q Branch of the Indian Intelligence was immediately alerted by the Sri Lankan CID about his presence in India. The Q branch was established in Tamil Nadu specially to keep surveillance on any alleged LLTE members or supporters who operate in Tamil Nadu.

It is said that a police party led by an officer of the Q branch arrested Saudaranayagam and handed him over to the Sri Lankan CID at Trichy Airport, who transported him by air to Colombo under the guard of three armed personnel. He has since been in unacknowledged detention.

In a letter addressed to President Chandrka Kumaratunga, Mr G G Ponnambalam Jr, the General Secretary of the Tamil Congress, made inquiries as to Saundaranayagam's whereabouts giving the details of his reported arrest and extradition from India to Sri Lanka.

Stating that Saundaranayagam is a Tamil aged 27 years from Chunnakám, his mother is in Vavuniya, and his maternal uncle is in Denmark, Mr Ponnambalam said in his letter to the President, "My instructions are that about the first week of July 1999, the above-named had obtained a visa from the Indian High Commission in Colombo to attend his sister's wedding in India and had left immediately.

On 8th October 1999 the above-named had gone to meet Rev.Father Samuel Gerad, who had solemnised his sister's marriage, to his Church at Thiruvanmayur in Chennai as the above-named was helping the Rev. Father in some Church work. He was taken into custody at that place by the Indian authorities. Inquiries by the relative of the above-named in India have revealed that he was handed to the Sri Lankan N.I.B., on 16th October 1999 after the N.I.B., was contacted by the Indian authorities.

In the meantime, passengers who had travelled to Colombo on Air Lanka flight No. 132 from Trichy on 16.10.1999 had seen a young Tamil,

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lean, of moderate complexion, about 5' 4" in height, aged about 25, seated in the departure lounge in the company of three armed Indian Police Officers.

Inside the plane, this young Tamil was seated at the back of the plane in the company of security personnel who are on every Air Lanka flight to check baggage. I am told that ordinarily there are only two such personnel. But on this particular flight there were four such officers.

On arrival at Colombo, some passengers had seen an ambulance parked on the tarmac close to this particular plane. This was seen as unusual. Since the young man was seen in the company of armed Indian police personnel at Trichy, the passengers were curious about this young man. It was reported to me that this young man was not brought to the Immigration counters at the Colombo Airport."

Ponnambalam also has asked the President whether proper legal procedures were followed if Saundaranayagam was in fact extradited from India to Sri Lanka.

Revealing some details of the mystery surrounding the arrest of Saundaranyagam, a report datelined 22 October in "The Telegraph" from Calcutta said that the Tamil Nadu police had arrested and deported a youth in secrecy to Sri Lanka on the charge of masterminding the assassination of a Sri Lankan Tamil leader in Colombo.

The hand-over had been kept under wraps because there is no extradition treaty between India and Lanka and the DMK regime is wary of a furore in the state where several Lankan Tamil expatriates have taken refuge.

Eric Saundaranayagam was arrested in Tamil Nadu a week earlier, nearly three months after Neelan Thiru-chelvam, a moderate Sri Lankan Tamil leader, was killed by a human bomb in Colombo. Though no one claimed responsibility, the incident bore the imprint of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The Lankan police tracked it down to the Tigers and one trail led to Saundaranayagam who had fled to a sanctuary in Tamil Nadu. He was allegedly involved in planning the assassination.

A week ago, the Tamil Nadu police zeroed in on Saundaranayagam and alerted their Lankan counterparts. In a cloak-and-dagger operation, he was taken back to Colombo by the Lankan police. The DMK regime in Tamil Nadu is keen to keep the incident under wraps as it does not want to be seen delivering a Tamil rebel into the hands of the Sinhalese government.

Back in the Seventies, two Tamil militant leaders wanted by the then Sirimavo Bandaranaike regime were apprehended here and deported. Subsequently, the two were sentenced to death. Then, too, M. Karunanidhi was the chief minister and the AIDMK used to taunt him for "betraying" the Tamil cause, the newspaper report said.

The Sri Lankan or Indian or Tamil Nadu authorities have up to now remained tight-lipped as to how and when Saundaranayagam was arrested, and whether in fact he was taken to Colombo with the co-operation of the Tamil Nadu police. •

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The East Timor Crisis - the Lessons

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

(Continued from last issue)

CNRM Peace Plan

CNRM was fully conscious of the reality that East Timorese could never achieve their political goal militarily; nor through continued confrontation that only prolonged the oppression and the attendant suffering of their people, especially when virtually all governments had turned a blind eye to the atrocities committed by the brutal Indonesian military (TNI). In 1992 it issued a major peace initiative - the CNRM Peace Plan - which was introduced by the CNRM's Special Representative, Jose Ramos Horta in the European Parliament and to the US Council on Foreign Relations in New York. The Portuguese government endorsed it and presented it to the UN Secretary General. The Plan received wide support internationally and offered a realistic way for Jakarta to extricate itself from the conflict in East Timor. But it was rejected totally by Indonesia.

The CNRM sponsored East Timor Peace Plan had three phases. Phase 1 (1-2 years) would involve Portugal, Indonesia and East Timor working together with the UN to implement a wide range of "confidence building measures", which included an immediate end to all armed activities in East Timor, a reduction of Indonesian troop levels to 1,000, release of all political prisoners, appointment of a UN Resident representing the UN Secretary General, the stationing in East Timor of UN agencies - UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, FAO.

Phase 2 (5-10 years) would involve the same powers co-operating to develop internal self-government, through a locally elected provincial assembly with a 5 year term. This included legalising all political parties regardless of their philosophies and objectives, managing elections with UN technical support. The Assembly would then elect a Governor (5 years) and then the remaining Indonesian troops would leave East Timor. The territory will have no army but a UN trained police force which will be responsible to the Governor. The Territory may enter into trade relations with foreign countries but Indonesia will retain sovereignty and control of foreign policy.

Phase 3 would involve the holding of a UN supervised referendum within one year of the beginning of this phase, in order to choose one of the three options provided by the UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) of December 15, 1960. These were: (a) Independence; (b) Free association with the colonial power, Portugal; or (c) Integration into Indonesia.

Political Changes in Jakarta

Pro-Democracy groups in Indonesia have been supporting self-determination for East Timor. President Suharto as noted earlier had emasculated all Indonesian institutions and made them loyal to himself, and simultaneously prevented any would-be leaders from developing a power base which might challenge his authority. Notwithstanding this, challenges to his authoritarianism had periodically been made by individuals and groups, only to be ruthlessly thwarted without their leaving a mark on the facade of government.

The new opposition that emerged in the early 1990s was more radical and better organised than the former challengers. It had three characteristics. First it was underground, united and permanent and could not be easily destroyed. Second it was seeking, not cosmetic changes to government or personnel but radical shifts towards genuine democracy. Third, it was based not upon the new middle classes which had prospered under Suharto, but upon the impoverished students, workers and farmers. It recognised the similarity of aims between their cause and that of the East Timorese. For both it was the Indonesian system of dictatorial government, military persecution and institutionalised corruption that held little prospect for their future and had blighted the lives of the East Timorese and Indonesian masses alike.

Although Indonesia's economic growth rates were relatively high during Suharto's rule, poverty and unemployment were widespread especially in the disadvantaged areas of eastern Indonesia. The benefits of the natural wealth of the country did not reach the vast majority of the people. Indonesia provides another example of the kind of development that has taken place in many developing countries, which failed to address vigorously the problems of poverty and inequity.

The East Timorese students and youths studying and working in Indonesia, and East Timorese groups in Australia and Europe found a new ally in the Indonesian pro-democracy groups. The struggle for democratisation in Indonesia and the quest for self-determination in East Timor had a common enemy. The two communities forged an alliance. Religious, ethnic or regional divisions did not hinder their determination to jointly resist oppression.

The 1997 financial crisis that hit East Asian economies had a telling effect on the life of the Indonesian people. It was the popular student protests throughout the early part of 1998 in Indonesia and the bloody rioting in the capital in which 1,200 people were killed that forced President Suharto to resign in May. His deputy B.J. Habibie succeeded Suharto as Indonesia's caretaker President. Opposition leader Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, who also opposed full independence for East Timor was expected to win the Presidential election by the MPR which had been advanced to 20 October 1999. But she was defeated by Abdurrahman Wahid, the partially blind liberal Moslem intellectual who received considerable support from the tainted ruling Golkar party following Habibie's withdrawal. President Habibie ruled himself out of the contest soon after the MPR voted to reject his "accountability" speech. The violence that erupted following the defeat of Megawati Sukarnoputri died when she was elected the Vice President by the MPR.

She is the daughter of the first president, Sukarno and heads the Indonesian Democratic Party - Struggle (PDI-P) which won 153 seats with 33.7 per cent of the total vote as against 120 seats obtained by the ruling Golkar

party in the June 7 general election held for the first time in four decades. The total number of members in the lower house (DPR) is 500 and with 200 appointed members - 135 regional representatives and 65 representing functional groups the total number in the MPR is 700. The election was held, following the sweeping political reforms approved earlier in the year by the MPR. These would not have been possible but for the mass protests by the people. However, the newly elected body met for the first time only on 1 October 1999 and Suharto's MPR continued to meet regularly in the interregnum.

Returning to Habibie's rule, a succession of events followed the political changes in 1998. President Habibie showed some flexibility towards granting East Timorese their self-determination right. In June 1998, there were unprecedented protests and demonstrations in East Timor calling for a UN-sponsored referendum. Leaders of foreign countries and ambassadors were allowed to visit Xanana Gusmao, a former teacher and poet turned Resistance leader, who was in Cipinang Prison in Jakarta. Calls for his release escalated in many foreign countries. UN Decolonisation Committee also held its 1998 hearings on East Timor in this new environment. It heard the statements made by Jose Ramos Horta on behalf of the CNRT and the representatives of the Portuguese Government and East Timorese and Solidarity groups. On July 10, the US Senate passed Resolution 237 urging the US administration to support the demand of the people of East Timor for a referendum to determine their political future.

President Habibie announced after a cabinet meeting held on 27 January 1999 that the MPR decree that annexed East Timor as the 27th province of Indonesia could be changed. The government was willing to consider two alternatives - wide ranging autonomy for the province, which if found unacceptable it would permit East Timor to secede from Indonesia. The latter would have to be decreed by the MPR at a general session.

Indonesia was keen to force the first option of special status with wide ranging autonomy for East Timor through whatever means. Portugal insisted that the East Timorese must be given the chance to determine whether to remain part of Indonesia or not through a referendum. The UN-brokered talks, however, continued despite this deadlock due to the perseverance of the UN Secretary General.

UN-Referendum

The agreement struck finally on 5 May 1999 between Indonesia and Portugal paved the way for the plebiscite to be conducted by the UN. It must be acknowledged that the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan acting under the 1982 UN mandate played a key role not only in this historic decision but also in its implementation. The large presence of UN personnel in East Timor became possible with the formation of United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor (Unamet) for organising the vote at short notice. The registration of all eligible voters which began in mid-July was itself a complex task in the hostile environment and disoriented conditions where many were in the mountains or relocated elsewhere such as West Timor. The safety of Falintil members who were sheltering in the mountains had to be guaranteed for them to come down and register their names. Meanwhile the pro-Jakarta men were keen to register many Timorese residing in West Timor and also intimidated the people in East Timor hoping that these would help to influence the result in their favour.

International observers (Ifet mission) were sent to monitor the vote as well as East Timorese civilians for militia violence. It must be noted that the responsibility for providing protection to East Timorese and to the members of Unamet and Ifet was assigned to the Indonesian government as per the 5 May Agreement. Subsequent events showed that only in theory, Indonesia's military reinforcements sent to East Timorwere meant to guarantee a peaceful vote. These were the very men who were supporting the pro-Jakarta militia. The UN had to postpone the ballot twice because of violence and intimidation by the militiamen. Finally, the poll on August 30 went smoothly with 98.6 per cent of voter turnout and 78.5 per cent voting in favour of independence. The UN mission soon found that the polling day peace was only the calm before the storm.

Post-Referendum Developments

Xanana Gusmao, recognised the highly volatile political climate and wanted a transitional period of autonomous rule to prevent the very bloodshed that came about after the referendum. However, it was President B.J. Habibie who wanted a snap election and which the UN welcomed most enthusiastically. The UN Security Council rushed into emergency consultations after the clashes outside the UN compound in Dili that followed the referendum. At first, it only issued a statement condemning the violence in Dili and demanded that the Indonesian authorities take steps to arrest those responsible. Some countries, notably New Zealand, Portugal and Canada urged the UN to prepare for the deployment of troops to restore law and order.

New Zealand went further suggesting a non-UN force to protect the East Timorese. With responsibility for law and order left to the Indonesian authorities until the ratification of the vote by the MPR, there was enough time for the militia to complete the destruction of East Timor. The US administration did not show initially the same commitment for action which was seen in Kwait and Kosovo.

President Habibie's declaration of martial law in East Timor was useless because the murderers and the looters had the full support of the military. Because of uncontrolled violence, UN ordered all the Unamet members to leave East Timor. They were relocated in Darwin, northern Australia. When the people were left as prey to the marauding militia, the credibility of the UN plummeted. Much of East Timor was devastated after the militia groups embarked on an orgy of bloodshed, looting and burning. Xanana Gusmao, who stayed for few days in the British Embassy in Jakarta after his release from detention before leaving for Darwin called for rapid deployment of international troops and relief for the 200,000 East Timorese in camps in West Timor, more than 60,000 hiding in the mountains of East Timor and thousands scattered across Indonesia. Many had been forcibly taken to West Timor by the militia and believed to be held virtually as hostages. Xanana described the refugee camps in West Timor as concentration camps when the visited the UN headquarters in New York during the current General Assembly meeting. Thousands of East Timorese (7,000, UN-FAO's estimate) died in the violence after the referendum. Of the 50,000 strong pro-

Jakarta militia spread throughout Indonesia, a large number had also been located in West Timor.

This calamity infuriated the western powers, many of whom had provided training to the Indonesian army, including the elite force - Kopassus responsible for much of the violence. They had also sold all kinds of weapons to the army. Australia, Indonesia's neighbour and her a close ally was now at the forefront pressing for strong intervention in East Timor. UN Security Council met hurriedly and passed a resolution a fortnight after the referendum to deploy troops under a multi-national force. The Security Council gave a robust mandate to the International Force for East Timor (Interfet) to restore law and order.

There was some bickering over its composition. Indonesia wanted a large presence from Asian countries and in particular was unhappy about Australia's leading role. Again Kofi Annan stood firm and ultimately Indonesia agreed to the Australia-led multi-national force. More than half the total strength of some 7,000 (8,000 was the original figure) troops provided by about 20 countries came from Australia. This composition will change with more detachments from Asian countries expected soon to replace some of the Australian troops. The size of the Interfet should also be compared with the 41,000 strong western force that was deployed in Kosovo. East Timor is 50 per cent larger than the Yugoslav province.

Even as the Interfet troops led by the Australian General Peter Cosgrove landed in East Timor, villages a few miles outside Dili were ablaze and the terror continued in the refugee camps in West Timor. The agreement with Indonesia permitted the deployment of Interfet troops only in East Timor. East Timorese who returned to Dili from their mountain hideout after the Interfet troops landed fled after witnessing the continued violence. With the arrival of more troops in the subsequent days and their presence visible in many parts of Dili, people's confidence in the efficacy of Interfet increased.

The majority of Indonesian troops stationed in East Timor also departed much sooner than expected. About 1,500 troops (compared with some 20,000 present earlier) stayed until the MPR revoked the annexation of East Timor. It approved the separation of East Timor without conditions the day before the Presidential election paving the way for a United Nations transitional administration to take charge of the territory. It is also relevant to mention here that the legislators agreed to withdraw demands that Portugal, East Timor's former colonial power, delete references to East Timor from its constitution.

There was, however, considerable resentment within the military establishment that the government had conceded to the pressures of the UN and western countries. General Wiranto, the Indonesian Army Commander claimed in Parliament on September 20 that in the first five years of occupation alone, the Army had lost 3,700 troops while 2,400 were injured. The departing Indonesian troops showed their frustration by burning and destroying the remaining houses and buildings as they left Dili.

At the very outset, the United States has made it very clear that it regards East Timor as very much in Australia's back yard and hence the unwillingness to perform a leading role in peacekeeping operation there. Although US supported the Australia-led Interfet, it was not the same as a visible US involvement as in Bosnia. The US Defense Secretary, William Cohen during his visit to Jakarta in September warned that Indonesia would face economic and political isolation if its military fail to disarm the militia. US has already suspended all links with Indonesia's military. US as the most powerful country has a major role in the implementation of UN resolutions. Their success or failure depends on the US government's commitment and support. It is difficult to say how long it will take for UN to depart from East Timor. Xanana Gusmao, speaking after a meeting with the British Prime Minister Tony Blair at Downing Street told journalists full independence for East timor would probably take about three years. This was before returning to East Timor, which happened only after Indonesia's Parliament ratified the result of the August 30 referendum.

East Timorese leaders themselves admit that their land does not have the economic base to survive without substantial help from abroad. Whatever infrastructure there was had been destroyed by the Indonesian army and the anti-independence militia. East Timor has to depend on the international community and possibly a wealthy "Big Brother" for reconstruction and thereafter for investment and economic growth. The case for international assistance was set out by Xanana Gusmao and Jose Ramos Horta, when they had discussions on September 29 with officials from donor governments and international agencies in Washington D.C.

The East Timor crisis has also drawn attention of the western powers to the imperative to take stern action against all violators of international humanitarian law. There is now a growing belief among them that this is essential so that it should serve as a warning to present and future military and militant leaders conducting wars that they will be held responsible for any serious violations of the international law. Coming in the wake of the Kosovo crisis, which opened the eyes of the world to the most inhuman treatment of civilians by the Yugoslav army and the Serb militia, the violations in East Timor have strengthened their resolve to bring to justice the perpetrators.

Mary Robinson, UN high commissioner for human rights called for an international commission of inquiry into atrocities in East Timor. She told an emergency session of the UN Human Rights Commission, convened at the request of Portugal there was "overwhelming evidence that East Timor has seen a deliberate, vicious and systematic campaign of gross violations of human rights". Jose Ramos Horta and Bishop Carlos Belo also pleaded for an international commission of inquiry in this session. Incidently, the UN commission has held only three previous emergency sessions in over half a century; twice on the war in former Yugoslavia and in 1994 on the genocide in Rwanda. The 53-member body was deeply divided on the formation of the commission of inquiry in the fourth emergency session. Many third world countries rallying behind Indonesia opposed the draft resolution sponsored by the European Union and which was also supported by the US. Indonesia insisted that its own investigation must proceed first. The Indonesian National Commission for Human Rights (Komnas Ham) was set up by the former President Suharto. The Commission's leaders are a retired Indonesian general and a senior member of Suharto's Golkar Party.

The amended resolution that the UN Commission adopted on 27 September called on the UN Secretary General to set up an international commission of inquiry into atrocities in East Timor which will work in co-ordination with Indonesian government's own human rights commission. International human rights organisations have expressed their disappointment with the compromise reached in Geneva. The announcement by Indonesia's Justice Minister that his country will not co-operate with the international commission prompted the UN to declare that the Commission will function with or without Indonesia's co-operation. Meanwhile, neither the Unamet nor the Interfet could collect and document the evidence of crimes against humanity. This contrasts markedly from the speed with which teams of police, forensic scientists and lawyers from the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague went into Kosovo and started work by sealing off and cataloguing mass graves. This has brought to focus the difference that exists in the commitments of the "developed" and "developing" nations to human rights. There is, however, the hope among the East Timorese leaders that the preliminary inquiry will result in the setting up of a special War Crimes Tribunal for East Timor.

The Future

The East Timor crisis has lessons not only for the UN and the international community that is anxious to see a peaceful world in the twenty-first century but also for militant movements and governments involved in ethnic wars. It is clear that UN intervention in any conflict requires the commitment and the active support of the western powers and normally the consent of the national government. And where there is UN intervention, the world body acts strictly according to its Charter as demonstrated by its dealing with Indonesia. It is only in exceptional circumstances that the western powers will act separately when realpolitik warrants immediate intervention. This is most unlikely when either the aims of the rebels and/or their fighting methods are considered unacceptable. The message that no group that violates intentionally international humanitarian law can expect any form of reward later has been somewhat blunted by the unprincipled compromise reached to end the most brutal war in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan in his opening address to the UN general assembly on 20 September 1999 stated that the emerging doctrine for robust international intervention to tackle human rights to be meaningful, "it must be, and seen to be, fairly and consistently applied irrespective of region or nation." As long as the line between national sovereignty and the right of the international community to intervene to end a manifest injustice remains indistinct, the prevailing discrepancies will continue.

Those who drafted Article 43 of the UN Charter more than 50 years ago had in mind only the wars between states. In today's world, the conflicts that cause enormous human losses and suffering and retard human progress occur most commonly within multi-ethnic countries. However, the underlying principle of the UN Charter as seen from the opening statement imposes a duty on the UN to intervene in certain situations where premeditated atrocities occur. This requires first defining clearly what these circumstances are and second establishing within the UN organisation, practical possibilities and routines for swift action in particular cases. The difficulty with the former lies in obtaining wide acceptance, as some countries like China and India have already expressed their opposition to the principle that human rights can take precedence over national sovereignty under certain specified circumstances.

Realpolitik also influences the governments of Asian and African countries on how they respond to the disorder and human rights violations in their neighbouring states. Nevertheless, violent methods to achieve political goals and terrorism, which has now become one of many global concerns are abhorred by regional and world powers. The irony is that among the former colonies in Asia and Africa which wanted freedom from foreign rule and succeeded in getting rid of their colonial rulers, the sovereign people in many of them have to depend now on foreign powers and international organisations for securing human rights and political freedom. •

Sri Lanka Like East Timor

The situation in Sri Lanka in the context of the ongoing ethnic conflict was comparable to the siuations in Kosovo and East Timor, according to V Kopalaswamy (Vaiko), the leader of the Tamil Nadu MDMK which is a constituent partner in India's ruling coalition. Despite the comparison, he was not seeking UN intervention in Sri Lanka.

Vaiko, an MP, has been for years a supporter of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which is fighting for an independent homeland in Sri Lanka's north and east.

"International perceptions about liberation movements has changed in recent times," Vaiko was quoted as saying recently to journalists in the southern Indian city of Madras.

"We believe the situation in Sri Lanka is the same as in Kosovo and East Timor. We will not try to influence India's policy in this regard, but will put forth our point of view to the government," he said.

Vaiko was also an MP in 1989 belonging to the then ruling party in Tamil Nadu, the DMK under the leadership of M Karunanidhi, when he undertook an illegal boat ride to Sri Lanka's north to meet LTTE chief Velupillai Prabahakaran when the Tamil Tigers were battling Indian troops deployed there. He undertook this journey without the permission of the party leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi.

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BOOK REVIEW

Irish Lessons of Peace

Reviewed by Professor Bertram Bastiampillai

Re-imagining Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland Insights: Edited by M Somadundram, Colombo, International Centre for Ethnic Studies

The impressive book comprises the contributions of five writers, headed by an introduction by the editor, while the second part consists of a large number of appendices. All contributors are learned and eminent as the articles in the collection demonstrate, but the assembly of the material in the second part of numerous documents, statements, speeches etc, shows that they are of uneven value, interest and relevance.

The introduction is vigorous, passionately crafted and makes the points which the author aims to drive deeply and extremely saliently. The written, a percipient student of contemporary affairs, provides the reader with an absorbing account of events past and makes one clearly understand the present unfortunate protracted, violence ridden ethnic conflict.

Minister of Justice, GI Peiris in Chapter 1 identifies the 15 issues of the Northern Ireland Agreement relevant to Sri Lanka and through the course of a lucid and analytical discussion, indicates how they could inform and influence an attempt to solve the unending ethnic strife that has ravaged Sri Lanka.

The second chapter adapted from a talk on 5 September 1998 in Sri Lanka by Professor Thomas G Frazer on "The Northern Ireland Agreement as a Model for Divided Societies" is thoroughly knowledgeable and well informed. Two sovereign governments of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic most political parties in Northern Ireland enhancing different ideologies and above all representing two traditions that had been uncompromisingly hostile to one another for almost one hundred years and more significantly three political parties of armed groups that had been engaged in violent confrontations for three decades, surprisingly reached an agreement.

But it was after experiencing so much loss of lives and misery that wisdom dawned and the agreement was arrived at. Short summaries of earlier attempts at peace making and the causes that provided the impetus to the more successful contemporary peace process are outlined. More valuable to a reader in Sri Lanka is the identification of the vital ingredients which presently form the basis that impelled a political and constitutional compromise. The writer has coherently indicated how useful the Northern Ireland Agreement could be as a model to reach peace in other split societies.

"More valuable to a reader in Sri Lanka, is the identification of the vital ingredients which presently form the basis that impelled a political and constitutional compromise."

Chapter 3 by Carmel Roulston analyses the rule and significance of women in the peace process.

The writer, after an interesting discussion concludes the voices of women were brought to the negotiations and were allowed to be makers of history in Ireland. A remarkable and exceptionally interesting chapter to be read.

Somasunderam has authorised Chapter 4 "The Northern Ireland Agreement: Thimpu Principles Applied to a Society with Two Mind Sets"? Again the writer presents his point of view forcefully and backs up his arguments with evidence and example.

In the first part of his essay he scrutinises governance the two mind sets, the Northern Ireland Agreement and the vicissitudes to which negotiations were subjected over years, nevertheless they were persevered with.

The second part beginning with section 5 on "Thimpu Principles", traces the story of the rejection of these principles by the Sri Lankan government's delegation as they would destroy" an united Sri Lanka" and were "inimical to the sovereignty of Sri Lanka". In his short conclusion Somasunderam emphasises the rele-vance in Sri Lanka of the Northern Ireland Agreement, refers to the insights it offers, and avers that Sri Lanka could benefit using them to create an opportunity to negotiate a peace if the opportunity were only grasped.

Chapter 5 by J Charitha Ratwatte is again another study on "Issues from the Northern Ireland Experience: Relevance to Sri Lanka Considered."

He traces how the conflict on Ireland reached a frustrating stalemate and how meaningless it had turned out to many, especially women and children. As a contrast, he points out that the conflict in Sri Lanka, still according to different points of view, is not so and it is believed that the Tigers could be coerced to talk. This section treats the differences in regard to devolution and in this respect the imperative to formulate a "pragmatic and practical India policy based on Sri Lanka's national self interest" is correctly pointed out.

The other sections deal with international support, the role of businessmen and pose the question "are there minorities in Northern Ireland?"

The Protestants and Catholics are almost numerically equal. Ratwatte proceeds to discuss, in other sections that follow, equally valuable issues in a useful comparative manner.

The chapter ends with the quest-ion "Can our erstwhile politicians make the sacrifices that have been made in Belfast?" This is a valuable, well written and fascinating account.

The appendices will be of use to those who look for easy and ready references to documents, statements and similar materials connected to the theme of this fine book.

This book has compressed good and informative reading on a topical subject within its pages, is readable, well informed and has logically presented chapters.

As the contributors to the study make out in a reasoned manner, tore-imagine Sri Lankan intelligent imagination, prudent vision and courageous decision making - from popular to political levels - remain the crying need. •

(Courtesy of: The Sunday Times Colombo)

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu mother *seeks educated bride for son, 34, B.Sc., (Eng)/ACCA. Send horoscope, details and photograph. M 1137 c/o Tamil Times.*

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Jaffna Hindu mother *seeks partner for fair, British born daughter, medical doctor, 30. Send details. M 1140 c/o Tamil Times.*

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Jaffna Hindu *seeks partner for brother, 37, 5'9", Ph.D. Civil Engineering, University Lecturer, divorcee. Send horoscope, details. M 1143 c/o Tamil Times.*

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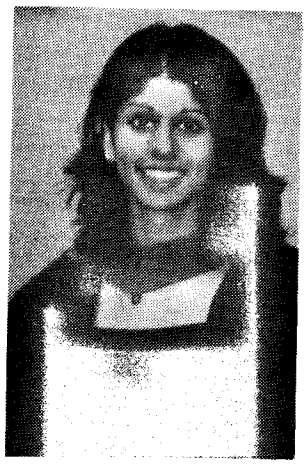
OBITUARIES



Rajika Malalgoda

It is with greatest sadness and deepest regret that we announce the death under tragic circumstances in a motor accident of **Rajika** *(23) beloved daughter of Mahinda and Indra; loving sister and sister-in-law of Rajeev and Saloni; loving grand daughter of late Norman and late Dorothy, late Rajendram and Gnanadevi (Sri Lanka); loving niece of Upali, Iranganie, Nihal (all of Sri Lanka), late Sunil, late Ranjit, Mohan Raja (Australia), Ravi and Yamuna (Canada). The funeral took place on Saturday, 13th November 1999 at the Basildon and District Crematorium.*

The members of the farnily thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them during the period of bereavement.

'You shall always have a place in our hearts and we will never forget the love and happiness that you brought into our lives'

– 'Shanthinivasa', 96 Celeborn Street, South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, Essex UK. Tel: 01245 322852.

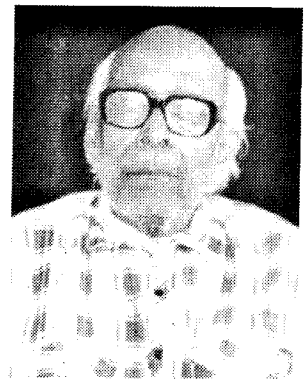
Appreciation on page 33.

Mr. K.S. Muthuvelu *(83), Retired Senior supervisor of Rural Development, Kopay, Sri Lanka, beloved husband of Maheswary; loving brother of late Balasubramaniam, Kandasamy (Denmark) and Kumarasamy (Vavuniya); loving father of Srikanthi, Mathanakanthi, Srimanavalan, Illango (France), Manukanthi, Sivakanthi (France) and Ketheeswaran; loving father-in-law of Somaskanthan, Rajah, Tharmini, Late Saianthy, Jeganathan (France) and Chevanthi; loving grandfather of Muralitharan, Muhunthan, Rajmathan, Tharshan, Rajsuthan, Manoj, Sutharshini, Vanthana, Dharshini, Jeyanthan, Sugevan, Manalan, Jeyananthan, Vithuran, Sanghawi, Mathuran, Vikarnan, and Vihasawi passed away on 26th October 1999 in Kopay and was cremated on 27th October.*

The members of his family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and helped them in several ways during the period of bereavement.

P. Sivalingam, *Formerly Deputy General Manager of Shell (Ceylon) Ltd and Ceylon Petroleum Corporation; loving husband of Saradha; son of late Mr. and Mrs. Peethamparam; loving father of Shankari (UK), Narayani (USA), Ramana (Canada) and Anantha (UK), father-in-law of Easwara Rupan (UK), Sudhakar Vamathevan (USA), Prasana (Canada) and Varuna Thirunathan (UK); loving grandfather of Mahisha (UK), Gajendran (USA), Archana (USA), and Ahila (UK) passed away peacefully on 16th October 1999. The funeral service took place in Colombo on 20th October according to Hindu rites.*

Members of the family thank relations and friends who attended the funeral service, sent messages of sympathy and helped in various other ways during the period of bereavement. – 57 Melville Avenue, South Croydon, Surrey. Tel: 020 8681 8954/020 8542 8107.



Mr Kandiah Suppiah, *Retired P.W.D. Overseer of Tellippalai; beloved husband of late Sellam and late Sivapooranam; loving father of late Thevanayaki, Dr Thirukkanesan (UK), Thillainadesan (Sydney) and Rathithevi (Melbourne); father-in law of Nagarajah (Sri Lanka), Dr Vinayagalingam, Arunthathy, and late Varuni; grandfather of Yasothai (Canada), Ananthi, Thamayanthi, Mugunthan, Amirthan, Kartick, Janani, and Senthil; brother of late Annappillai and late Ilayapillai passed away on 10th November 1999 in Melbourne and was cremated on 13th November, The members of his family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy, assisted and shared their grief during this period.*

– Dr. S.Thirukkanesan, 114 Holgate Drive, Luton LU4 0XD). Tel: 01582 576061.

IN MEMORIAM

Mrs Chandra Ragupathy

In loving memory of my beloved wife **Chandra** *on the fourth anniversary of her passing away on 26th November 1995.*

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her husband Ragupathy. – 262 Wricklemarsh Road, London SE3 8DW.

In loving memory of **Mrs. Maragathavalli Kanapadhipillai,** *beloved wife of the late P. Kanapadhipillai, Attorney at Law, Uduppiddy, Sri Lanka on the first anniversary of her passing away on 5th December 1998.*

Greatly loved, deeply missed and always remembered by all her loved ones. – Box 34939, Lusaka, Zambia.

In loving memory of **Mr. P.V. Nadarajah** *on the eleventh anniversary of his passing away on 16th November 1988.*

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by his loving wife Thilagavathy; children Usha, Varathan, Nalini and Nanthini; son-in-law Sivanathan, Rajkumar and Vathsayan; daughter-in-law Savithiri; grandchildren Bairavi, Luxmi, Uruthiran, Abhirami and Sebestian. – 4 Fernbrook Place, Castle Hall, NSW 2154, Australia.

Lovingly Remembered on the First anniverary of the Passing away of

Daisy Selvaranee Rasiah

on 10th November 1998.

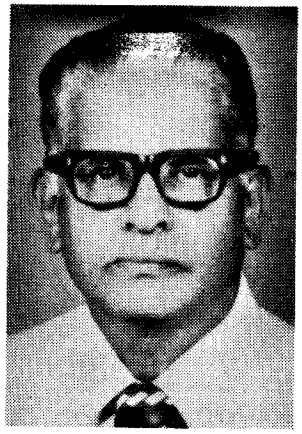
In Ever Loving memory of our Dear Acca, Periammah and Periamami who will be Deeply missed and always Remembered.

'Deep in our hearts you will always stay'

Fondly remembered by your loving sisters Amirtharanee and Thevaranee, sisters-in-law Selvaranee and Inpamani, Nephews, Nieces, grandnieces and grandnephew, relations and friends. – 64 Jessup Close, London SE18.

In fond memory of **Dr. P. Alageswaran** *on the seventh anniversary of his passing away on 10th November 1992.*

Much loved and missed by Ratnes, Krishna, Shyamala, Family, Friends and Relations.



Mr Richard Jeyarajasingam

In treasured memory of a dear husband and father on the ninth annivesary of his passing away on 27th November 1990.

Unearth remembrances fragrant with love
Giving us the strength to carry on
Till we meet you in the HEAVEN above.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by Ranee and children.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Dec. 3 *Krishna Eekathasi; Feast of St. Francis Xavier.*

Dec. 5 *Pirathosam; 6.00pm Tamil Orphans Trust presents Music Concert of Flute recital by Preadeepan Vetpillai and Vocal recital by Sivani Senthilkumar at Ealing Town Hall, Uxbridge Road, London W5 2HL. Tel: 0181 908 1101/422 0012.*

Dec. 6 *Feast of St. Nicholas.*

Dec. 7 *Amavasai; Feast of St. Ambrose.*

Dec. 8 *Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Dec. 11 *Sathurthi; 7.00pm SCOT Christmas and Millennium Dinner and Dacne at Greenford Hall, Ruislip Road, Greenford. Tel: 0181 870 9897/ 579 7986./ South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Children's Christmas Party. Tel: 0181 542 3285.*

Dec. 13 *Vinayaka Sashti.*

Dec. 14 *Thiruvembavai commences; Feast of St. John of The Cross.*

Dec. 18 *SLTWG Christmas Dinner and Disco at Merton Hall, 76 Kingston Road, London SW19. Tel: 0181 542 3285.*

Dec. 19 *6.00pm London Tamil Centre Christmas Party at Wembley High School Hall, East Lane, Wembley; Vaikunda Eekathasi.*

Dec. 20 *Karthigai; Pirathosam.*

Dec. 22 *Full Moon.*

Dec. 25 *Christmas Day; Sankadakara Sathurthi.*

Dec. 26 *7.00pm League of Friends of the University of Jaffna Annual Dinner Dance at Harrow and Wembley Progressive Synagogue, 326 Preston Road, Harrow. Tel: 01923 225850; Feast of St. Stephen.*

Dec. 27 *Feast of St. John.*

Dec. 28 *Feast of the Holy Innocents.*

Dec. 31 *Feast of St. Sylvester.*

Putney Church Carol Service

The Putney Church London Tamil Christian Congregation will be having their 27th year Carol service, celebrating the birth of Christ on Sunday, December 12th at 4pm. Venue: Rivercourt Methodist Church, King Street, Hammersmith, London W6. The theme of the Carol Service is Meekness and Majesty. Carols will be sung in both Thamil and English. The service will be conducted by Revd Barnabas Alexander. For further details: Mr. Rajan 0181 621 0527/0181 427 2722.

WEDDING BELLS

Usha Mahadeva *married* **David Moran** *recently at a Hindu ceremony in Kent. Usha, the second daughter of Professor Kopan Mahadeva and Dr. Seethadevi Mahadeva, now works as Systems Engineering Manager to T & D (Rotherham) Ltd., and is an M.Sc. in Robotics of Birmingham University, and a Chartered Mechanical and Production Engineer. David Moran, B.Sc. (Salford) is Senior Building Surveyor to Bradford City Council. The simple rites were performed by Guru Dr. K.N. Ratnavel of Ilford, entirely in Tamil with Thevaarams sung by Mathini Sriskandarajah.*

Rajika Malalgoda (1976-1999) – An Appreciation

Attending a friend's funeral is not something that you expect to do, especially when that friend is still in her early twenties. On 7th November 1999 one of my closest friends Rajika, was killed in a road accident, leaving her family and friends to mourn her. It is very hard to come to terms with this, and to accept that with her death comes the loss of a special woman who had so much to offer life.

She will always be remembered for her kindness and compassion. Qualities that earned her many friends including those from her old school Chelmsford County High School, her university in Leeds, and her work. In the future the large network of friends which Rajika built around herself will have a significant missing link, simply because she is no longer there keenly trying to keep in touch with everybody she cared about.

She showed extreme willingness to do what she could to help other people. This extended beyond those she knew and led her to dedicate her time and energy to causes such as Oxfam and Amnesty International. For those of us lucky enough to have benefited from these special qualities we will now always be poorer because she is gone.

She was a successful, ambitious person. In 1998 she graduated with Honours from Leeds University with a degree in Pharmacology. Her knowledge and qualifications led her to a career working for two well respected pharmacological companies. Her first job was with Par Excel in Sheffield, and then in the summer of 1999, she moved to London to live with her brother and his wife, whilst she began a new job with Eisai.

Had she lived, Rajika would have continued to grow her success, and all who knew her are proud of her achievements, and proud of the person she was.

Rajika was one of a kind. I and all who loved her will always miss her dearly.

Rebecca Knight.

Kamalesh Australian Table Tennis Champion

Fifteen year old **Kamalesh Tharmasuthan,** *the elite table tennis player from Australia became the* **Under 18 Table Tennis National Champion of Australia** *at the finals held in Queensland recently. He beat the New South Wales reigning champion 21-17, 21-18 in a tense battle. He is one of the youngest to win this title in the under 18 group.*

A fortnight prior to the above achievement Kamalesh won the Senior Boys Open Event at the Australian Schools Championships. In April this year he was selected to represent the Victoria Youth (Under 20) team in the Australian Youth Championships held in Melbourne. Victorians were Interstate Champions and Kamalesh was one of the leading players with eight wins.

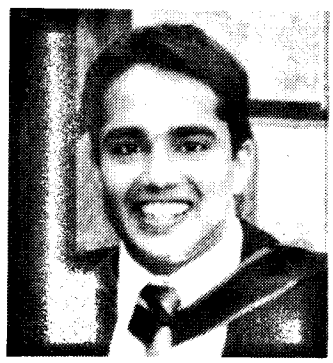
Kamalesh excels in studies too and won a scholarship to study at Haileybury College, Victoria, where he is in year 10. His father Tharmasuthan, a former Jaffna Open Table Tennis Champion was a student of Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai.

Tamil Senior Citizens Meet

Tamil Senior citizens of South East London organised an exhibition and a cultural programme at the Bellingham North Community Centre Hall on 2nd October 1999. The exhibition was opened at 3.30 p.m. by the Chief Guest Cllr. Ron Stockbridge who was welcomed by the President Mr. C. Velaiyutham and the Vice-President Mrs J. Shanmuganathan. The items for display were produced by the Senior Citizens themselves viz Model Palmyrah Fruit, Traditional Sri-Lankan food, Sri-Lankan kitchen utensils, national costumes children's dresses and an oil painting of an English cottage. The work of 30 students of the English class who had joined with a smattering knowledge and had advanced to a high standard under the tutorship of the English teacher was on display. The Chief Guest and the visitors evinced great interest in the exhibits and the first part of the programme ended with an address by the chief guest and a vote of thanks by the secretary Mrs. K. Tharmalingam.

The Cultural Programme was commenced at 6.30 p.m. with the traditional lighting of the lamp and the singing of the 'Association song' with gusto by the members. The Chief Guest Cllr Les Eytles and the Guest of Honour, Cllr Harry Kanagasabai, Deputy Mayor of the Southwark Council were garlanded and Mr. Welch Balasingam, a senior citizen shared with the assembly the poem 'Call of Lanka'. The president of the association in his welcome address pressed for the Sri Lankan Tamils to be recognised with a separate identity. The chief guest in his speech applauded the members for the good work done and pledged his support for the progress of the association. The guest of honour spoke a few words in Tamil, his mother tongue and extolled the membership for their commitment to the association. There were two English plays, poetry recitals, alluring dances and songs. There was a fancy dress competition, serving of refreshments, distribution of prizes to participants, a special award to Mr. K.V. Pasupathy, the oldest pioneer senior citizen. The celebrations terminated at 10 p.m. with a vote of thanks by the Secretary Mrs K. Tharmalingam.

Examination Success



Twenty two year old **Narayanan Karunanithy** *has completed his MBBS from King's College with a distinction in Pathology. He won the George Qvist Prize for Anatomy in 1995 and the Mary Wilmer Prize for Pediatrics in 1998. He excelled in sports too and captained the King's College Cricket and Badminton teams. He plays for the Hainhault and Clayhall Cricket Club.*

Narayanan is the youngest song of Arumugam Karunanithy of Sandilipay and Saradhamani Karunanithy, formerly teacher Royal College, Colombo and presently of Cranbrook Rise, Ilford, Essex, UK.

ENCHANTING SIVAHAMY

With the GCSE over and a leisurely slow step is taken towards the all important A Level, the anxiety of our Tamil parents hots up boundlessly to see their loved ones' years of training in Bharata Natyam is fulfilled to their satisfaction through an Arangetram ceremony before an enlightened audience.

On 25th September we attended at the Logan Hall the Bharata Natya Arangetram of Kumari Sivahamy daughter of the wel! known medical pair Sivakumar and Shanthi. Meticulously trained for seven years and presented by her Guru, Uma Chandradeva, a well known Chennai Kalakshetra graduate. The opening steps themselves proclaimed the artistic credibility of young Sivahamy.

The repertoire was the sampradaya paddati – Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Sabdam, Varnam and Padams, and the uniqueness was the entire compositions were Tamil oriented. At the initial ground breakers Alaripu and Jatiswaram themselves Sivahamy's perfect angasuddham was estabished and in the following Sabdam, she brought out her marvellous talent in creative expression.

The main Varnam a special form of composition in Bharata Natya exposition, was chosen from the works of Papanasam Sivan, illustrating the various moods and yearnings in love – in this case, Valli's love towards Muruga conveyed through her Thozhi. It was superbly danced and mesmerised the entire audience by the enchanting Sivahamy, a Classical virtuoso. A special note needs mention here: In addition to the many compositions selected as Padams from the works of Subramanya and Suddhananda Bharatis, a special composition 'Paddam ontru ada vanthen' by Dr. Sivakumar, Sivahamy's father, on the Sakthi peedams in Sri Lanka, with music by Nagarajan was included, a special colour.

The music was provided by an experienced and talented group – Singer Kutalam Nagarajan a specialist in providing vocal support at dances, Karaikudi Krishnamurthi, another Kalakshetra veteran, on the Mridangam, Tiruvarur L. Kothandapani on the violin and Pichappa Gnanavarathan on the flute.

Sivakumar family should be congratulated on their gracious arrangement in inviting a seniormost professor of Kalakshetra, Kalaimamani N.S. Jayalakshmi to grace the occasion as a Special Guest.

G.S.S.

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World Mental Health Day 1999

Welcoming a packed audience of music lovers in North West London in the Church of Ascension Hall, Beaufort Road on 10th October 1999, Dr. K. Nagarajah, Chairman, The World Hindu Maha Sangam said that for a long time music had played a role in bringing improvement to mental health. The very fact that a large number of music lovers, representing different organisations had assembled to celebrate World Health Day, in itself, is a standing testimony to the importance and efficacy of the interaction of music and health. The audience included mental health patients as well. Dr. Nagarajah asserted that the World Hindu Maha Sangam is dedicated to the cause and would do all it can to further it by taking the steps needed to promote an awareness among the public.

After the inaugural address, there was a music competition in which each participant was allowed five minutes to sing cinema or classical songs in their own language. The judges were Mrs. Ambika Thamotheram, Mrs. Visalam Dandapani and Mrs. Seetha Venkataraman.

Dr. Arun Natarajan was placed first in both classical and film song competition for adults.

Miss Siyamini Sivananthan was placed first in the children category.

22nd Anniversary Celebrations

Members of the Saiva Munnetta Sangam (UK) celebrated the twenty second anniversary of its formation at Caterham High School Hall, Clayhall, Essex on 9.10.99. Proceedings commenced with the chanting of religious hymns followed by 22 ladies lighting 22 lamps arranged in a row near the stage to mark the 22nd anniversary. It was a colourful event to behold for not only were the burning lamps bright and brilliant, it was resplendent and elegant sartorially as well.

Mr. M. Natgunathayalan, the General Secretary, who was to deliver the welcome address, cut short his speech drastically to a mere two minutes, emphasising the need to be punctual, as he realised that the programmes were going to run behind schedule. It was an exemplary response indeed. Mr. V. Nagaratnam, the president of the Sangam outlined the various activities carried out last year conspicuous of which was the assistance to the needy in Srilanka. The Chief Guest, Counciller Riaz Ahmed, The Mayor of Newham gave away the prizes to the winners in the competitions for speech and chanting of Thevarems in the various age groups.

The students of the Naavalar Centre for Tamil Culture presented two items – a dance ensemble and a vocal ensemble. This was followed by an orchestra by the students of Mrs. Senthilselvi Vamananthan. The last item which was unique in nature was the harmonious confluence o fmellifluous Nathams from four instruments viz veena, Violin, flute and Miruthangam. It was aptly named 'Shruthilaya Sagamam'. The students who took part in these programmes have to be congratulated for the interest shown and efforts taken to learn Indian Music in spite of the environment in which they are living.

The lack of importance given to the chanting of Thirumurai was noticeable. It would have made the celebration more meaningful vis-a-vis propagation of Saiva Thirumurai, which is one of the cardinal objectives of this esteemed organisation. Nevertheless, one cannot fail to appreciate the work the Sangam is doing to inculcate our cultural values in the minds of the younger generation. The evening function came to a successful conclusion with the serving of sumptuous meals to the guests.

– Vimal Poopalasingam.

Tact, Manners and Relationships

People need to learn tact, manners to form meaningful relationships. Relationships exist not only at home, but with relatives, friends and colleagues and to a greater part with the world outside. Manners are the right way to do day to day things. Without manners and tact you get a society that is uncontrollable.

Learning to respect others and their wishes is paramount to relationship. There will be a time for talking and then for listening, a proper discussion will consist of both and not just one. Communication is an integral part of living. I believe that if we as Tamils can learn to teach others these key points on how to behave with everyone they come into contact with, there will be no holding back to what we can achieve as a people, effectively and with little disagreement. So start practising it at home and with all those around you and you will notice that the unachievable will be achievable. In a world of conflict good manners and behaviour always win through.

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